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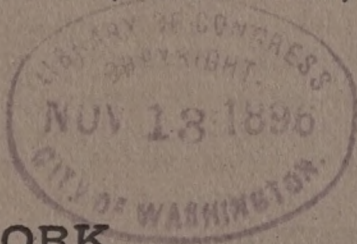
THE
YOKE
OF
THE
THORAH

BY

HENRY HARLAND

(SIDNEY LUSKA)

*Author of "Two Women or One,"
"Grandison Mather," "Mrs. Peixada,"
"A Latin Quarter Courtship," "As it
Was Written," "Two Voices," etc., etc.*



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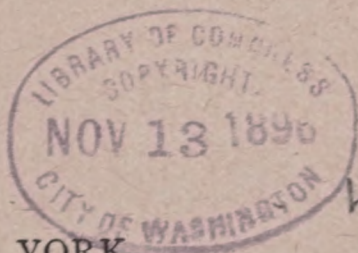
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TO

EDMUND CLARENCE STEDMAN,

EXCEPT FOR WHOSE COUNSEL AND ENCOURAGEMENT THIS BOOK
WOULD NEVER HAVE BEEN WRITTEN, IT IS NOW GRATE-
FULLY AND AFFECTIONATELY INSCRIBED.

THE YOKE OF THE THORAH.

I.

IT was the last day of November, 1882. The sun had not shone at all that day. The wind, sharp-edged, had blown steadily from the north-east. The clouds, leaden of hue and woolly of texture, had hung very close to the earth. Weather-wise people had predicted snow—the first snow of the season ; but none had fallen. Rheumatic people had had their tempers whetted. Impressionable people, among them Elias Bacharach, had been beset by the blues.

Elias had tried hard to absorb himself in his work ; but without success. His colors would not blend. His brushes had lost their cunning. His touch was uncertain. His eye was false. At two o'clock he had given up in despair, and sent his model home. Then he sat down at the big window of his studio, and looked off across the tree-tops into the lowering north. A foolish thing to do. It was a cheerless prospect. In the clouds he could trace a hundred sullen faces. The tree-tops shivered. The

whistling wind, the noises of the street, the drone of a distant hand-organ, mingled in dreary, enervating counterpoint. His own mood darkened. Though he had every reason to be contented—though he had youth, art, independence, excellent health, sufficient wealth, and not a care in the world—he was nervous and restless and depressed. The elements were to blame. Under gray skies, which of us has not had pretty much the same experience?

By and by Elias got up.

“I’ll go out,” he said, “and walk it off.”

He went out. For a while he walked aimlessly hither and thither. But walking did not bring the hoped-for relief. He and the world were out of tune. The men and women whom he passed were one and all either commonplace or ugly. The sounds that smote his ears were inharmonious. The wind sent a chill to his bones; besides, it bore a disagreeable odor of petroleum from the refineries across the river. “I might as well—I might better—have remained within-doors,” was his reflection. Presently, however, he found himself in Union Square. This reminded him that there was a little matter about which he wanted to see Matthew Redwood, the costumer. Elias had lately read Mistral’s “*Mirèio*.” The poem had fired his enthusiasm. He was bent upon making *Mirèio* the subject of a picture. But, he had asked himself, what style of costume do the Provençal peasant women wear? He had determined to consult Redwood. Now, being in Redwood’s neighborhood,

he would call upon the old man, and state the question.

Redwood's place was just below Fourteenth Street, on Fourth Avenue. The house had formerly been a dwelling-house. In the process of its degeneracy, it had most likely passed through the boarding-house stage. At present it was given over without reserve to commerce. A German drinking-shop occupied the basement, impregnating the air round about with a smell of stale lager beer. Redwood used the parlors—large, lofty apartments, with paneled walls and frescoed ceilings—and the floors above. The frescoes, of course, dated from the dwelling-house epoch. Their hues were sadly faded. Here and there, in patches, the paint had peeled off. Three pallid cupids, wretchedly out of drawing, floated around the plaster medallion from which the gas fixture depended. Elias never entered here without thinking of the curious secrets those cupids might have whispered, if they had been empowered to open their painted lips. What scenes of joy and sorrow had they not looked down upon in the past? Merry-makers had danced beneath them; women had wept beneath them; lovers had wooed their mistresses beneath them; what else? The intimate inner life of a family, of a home, had gone on beneath them. How many domestic quarrels had they watched? How many weddings? How many funerals? What strange stories had they not overheard? Of what strange doings had they not been mute witnesses? Be-

tween the windows stood a tall pier-glass. Its gilt frame was chipped and tarnished. A milky film, like that which obscures the eyes of an aged man, had gathered over its surface. The quicksilver was veined, like a leaf. It had a very knowing look, this ancient mirror, as though, if it had chosen, it could have startled you with ghostly effigies of the forms and faces that it had reflected in by-gone years. Elias Bacharach, who enjoyed having his fancy stirred, was always glad of an excuse to drop in at Redwood's.

Elias climbed Redwood's stoop, and opened the door. It had been dark enough outside. Inside it was darker still. It took a little while for Elias's eyesight to accommodate itself to the change. Then the first object of which it became conscious was the sere and yellow pier-glass between the windows. Far in its mottled depths—down, that is to say, at the remotest and darkest end of the room—he saw Matthew Redwood, the costumer, in conversation with a young girl. The young girl's face, a spot of light amid the surrounding shadows, had an instantaneous and magnetic effect upon Elias Bacharach's gaze. He quite forgot his old friends, the cupids. Turning about, and drawing as near to the couple as discretion would warrant, he made the young girl the victim of a fixed, eager stare.

She was worth staring at. From under the brim of her bonnet escaped an abundance of golden hair—true golden hair, that gleamed like a mesh of sun-

beams. In rare and beautiful contrast to this, she had a pair of luminous brown eyes, set like living jewels beneath dark eyebrows and a snowy forehead. Add a rose-red, full-lipped mouth, white teeth, and faintly blushing cheeks ; and you have the elements from which to form a conception of her. She was chatting vivaciously with the master of the premises. In response to some remark of his, she laughed. Her laugh was as crisp, as merrily, as melodious, as a chime of musical glasses. Who could she be, and what, Elias wondered. Probably an actress. Few ladies, unless actresses, had dealings with the costumer, Redwood. Yet, at the utmost, she was not more than seventeen years old ; and her natural and unsophisticated bearing seemed in no wise suggestive of the green-room. Ah ! now she was going. " Good-by," Elias heard her say, in a voice that started a quick vibration in his heart ; and next moment she swept past, within a yard of him, and crossed the threshold, and was gone. For an instant, never so delicate and impalpable a perfume, shaken from her apparel, lingered upon the air. Elias stood still, facing the door through which she had disappeared.

" Ah, good-day, Mr. Bacharach ; what can I do for you ? " old Redwood asked, coming up and offering his hand.

" You can tell me who that wonderful young lady is," it was on the tip of Elias's tongue to reply : but he stopped himself. Without clearly knowing why, he was loth to reveal to another the interest and

the admiration that she had aroused in him. He was afraid that his motive might be misconstrued, afraid of compromising his dignity, of appearing too easily susceptible in the old man's eyes. So he put down his curiosity, and began about Mirèio, demanding enlightenment on the score of Provençal costumes.

"Provençal costumes," the old man repeated, with a twang that savored of New Hampshire; "South-French, we say in the trade. Why, certainly. I've got a whole lot of lithographs, that show all the varieties. But they're up to my house. You couldn't make it convenient to come and look at them there, could ye? Then I'd lend you those that struck your fancy."

"That's very kind of you," said Elias. "Where do you live? And when would it suit you to have me call?"

"I live up in West Sixty-third Street, No. — ; and you might drop in most any evening after dinner—to-night, if you've got nothing better to do."

"Very well; to-night, then," agreed Elias, and bade the old man good afternoon.

He went back to his studio. He had got rid of his blues; but he could not get rid of his vision of the golden-haired young lady. That, fleeting as it had been, had photographed itself upon his retina. Again and again he heard her tinkling laughter. Again and again he breathed the evanescent, penetrating perfume that she had left

behind her upon quitting the costumer's shop. Excepting his mother, now dead, and the models whom he employed, Elias Bacharach had never known a woman, young or old, upon terms of greater intimacy than those required for bowing in the street, or paying one or two formal calls a year. Until to-day, indeed, he had never even seen a woman whom he had desired to know more closely. But this young girl with the golden hair had taken singular possession of his fancy. A score of questions concerning her presented themselves for solution. Her name? He ran over all the women's names that he could think of, from Abigail down to Zillah, seeking for one that seemed to fit her. None struck him as delicate or musical enough. Her condition in life? Was she, after all, an actress? If so, at what theater? He did not care much for the theater as a general thing; but if he only knew at which one she performed, he would certainly go to see her. Her age? Had he been right in setting it down at seventeen? Where did she live? Who were her family? Would he, Elias Bacharach, ever come face to face with her again? What were the chances of his some time having an opportunity to make her acquaintance? Perhaps he knew somebody who knew her, and could introduce him to her. Only, he was ignorant of her name, and therefore powerless to institute inquiries. How stupid he had been not to ask Redwood; how absurdly timid and self-conscious! But it was not yet too late. He would ask him at his house in

the evening. Then, having identified her, it might be possible, by one means or another, to procure a presentation. Delightful prospect ! How he would enjoy talking to her, and hearing her talk, and all the while feasting his eyes upon the delicious loveliness of her face ! He wondered whether her character accorded with her appearance. Was she as sweet and as pure and as bright, as she was beautiful ? He wondered— But it would take too long to tell all the wonderment of which she was subject. When evening came, Elias promised himself, old Redwood should gratify his thirst for information.

II.

AT eight o'clock Elias was ushered by a maid-servant into Redwood's parlor.

Redwood's parlor was the conventional oblong parlor of the conventional New York house, conventionally furnished and decorated. It had white walls, black walnut wood-work, a gaudily stenciled ceiling, and a florid velvet carpet, into which your feet sank an inch, and which gave off a faint but acrid odor of dye-stuffs. For pictures there were three steel engravings—The Last Supper, The Signing of the Declaration of Independence, The Landing of the Pilgrims—all hung as near to heaven as the limitations of space would allow. The chairs were of mahogany, upholstered in sleek and

slippery hair cloth. Upon the huge sarcophagus which served for mantelpiece, a gilt clock, under a glass dome, registered five minutes past six, with stationary hands. This started one's mind irresistibly backward, in quest of the precise point in time at which the clock had stopped, and set one to speculating upon what the condition of the world was then. Years ago, or only months? In summer, or winter? Morning or afternoon? What of moment was happening then? Who was President? Where was I, and what doing? Perhaps—it was such an old-fashioned clock—perhaps I had not yet been born. In the corner furthest from the window there was a square piano, closed, and covered by a dark brown cloth, like a pall. Just above it, so that they could not be reached except by standing upon it, some book-shelves were suspended. These contained the "Arabian Nights," "The History of the Bible," Cooper's novels, and an old edition of the "New American Cyclopedia." Beneath the chandelier stood a center table, with a top of variegated marbles. This bore a student's lamp, a Russia leather writing case, an ivory paper knife, a photograph of Mr. Emerson, and half a score of books. The literature of the center table was rather more seasonable than that of the hanging shelves. Greene's "Short History of the English People," "The Victorian Poets," "Society and Solitude," and the "Poems of Dante Gabriel Rossetti," testified that somebody had modern instincts, testimony which was corroborated by an

open copy of "Adam Bede," laid face downward upon the sofa. Elias wondered who somebody might be.

Presently old Redwood entered, in dressing-gown and slippers. He carried a large bundle under his arm.

"Here," said he, "are the plates I spoke of. Run them over, and pick out those that please ye."

The examination of the plates occupied perhaps a quarter-hour. When it was finished, Elias thanked the old man, and began to make his adieux. Then, abruptly, as though the question had but just occurred to him, "Oh, by the way," he inquired, in a tone meant to be careless and casual, "can you tell me who that young lady was—the young lady I saw down at your place this afternoon?"

"Young lady?" queried Redwood, with a blank look, scratching his chin, and knitting his brow. "Down to my place? What young lady?"

"Why, a young lady with golden hair. You were talking to her when I came in."

"Oh, with golden hair—oh, yes." The blank look gave way to an intelligent and slightly quiz-zical one. "But why do you want to know?"

"She's such a remarkable bit of coloring," explained Elias; "the finest I've seen this long while. I'd give my right hand to be allowed to paint her."

"Your right hand! Rather a high offer that, ain't it?"

"Well, but there's not much danger of its being accepted."

"I don't know," said Redwood, reflectively, "I'm not so sure."

"What?" cried Elias. The syllable did duty for expletive and interrogatory at the same time.

"I say I'm not sure but it might be managed."

Breathlessly : "But *what* might be managed?"

Redwood's meaning was clear enough ; but it seemed to Elias too good and too surprising to be true. So he chose to have it set forth in terms of positive affirmation.

"Why, what are we talking about? But she might be got to sit for ye."

"You don't say so? Are you serious? How?"

"Well, we're pretty well acquainted, she and I. I might propose it to her."

"Do—do, by all means. But is there any likelihood of her consenting?"

"Why, yes, I guess she'd consent—that is, if I urged her."

"Oh, well, you will urge her, won't you?"

The old man closed one eye, and twirled his mustache. "Hum; that depends. You must make it worth my while."

"Worth your while?" faltered Elias, surprised, and somewhat shocked, at discovering old Redwood to be so mercenary. "Well—well, what do you want?"

"I want—let me see. Well, I guess I want the picture. You must make me a present of the picture."

"Oh, come; that's unreasonable."

"I thought you said you'd give your right hand. I shouldn't have much use for that. So I'll take your handiwork, instead."

"That was a figure of speech. I'll pay a fair price, though. Name one that will satisfy you."

"I've just done so."

"Oh, but that's ridiculous."

"Well, that's the only price I'll talk about. And I'll tell you this, besides : she never'll sit for you at all, unless I advise her to. She sets great store by my opinion. You promise me the picture, and I'll guarantee you her consent."

"It's asking a great deal. It's asking far too much."

"All right. Then say no more about it."

"But—"

"Oh, you can't beat me down, Mr. Bacharach. When I say a thing, I mean it. You'll only waste your breath, trying to haggle with me. The picture, or nothing—those are my terms."

Elias's eyes were full of the young girl's beauty ; his ears still rang with the music of her laughter ; the prospect that old Redwood held out was such an unexpected and such a tempting one : "So be it," he said impulsively. "You shall have the picture."

"It's a bargain," cried Redwood. "Shake on it." After they had shaken hands : "When would you like to begin ?"

"At once—as soon as possible."

"I'll ask her to fix an early day."

"But are you sure? Is there no chance of her refusing?"

"Now, haven't I given you my word? What you afraid of? The sittings, of course, will be had at her residence, not in your studio."

"Oh, of course. Just as she chooses about that. Is—is she an actress?"

"An actress!" The old man laughed. "Bless you, no! What put that idea into your head?"

"Oh, I don't know. I thought she might be. But her name—you haven't told me her name."

"Her name—Excuse me a minute," said Redwood.

He stepped to the door, stuck his head into the hall, and called at the top of his voice, "*Chris tine!*"

"Yes."

The word tinkled musically in the distance.

"Come down here to the parlor, will ye?"

"Yes, father."

Elias's pulse bounded. Did he indeed recognize the voice? What a ninny he had been making of himself! How inordinately dense, not to have guessed their relationship from old Redwood's assurance in answering for her. He felt awkward and embarrassed; and yet he felt a certain excitement that was not at all unpleasant.

"Mr. Bacharach, permit me to make you acquainted with my daughter, Miss Christine Redwood," said the old man.

Elias bowed, but dared not look at her to whom he bowed. He heard her bid him a silvery good-evening. Then he stole a side glance. Yes, it was she, she of the golden locks.

"Ha-ha-ha!" roared old Redwood. "Quite a surprise, eh, Mr. Bacharach?"

"A—a delightful one, I'm sure," stammered Elias.

"Well, now, then, sit down, sit down, both of you," the old man rattled on. "That's right. There, now we can proceed to business. Chris, Mr. Bacharach here, an old customer of mine, is a painter, an artist—with an especial eye to fine bits of coloring, hey, Mr. Bacharach?"

"Oh," Christine responded softly, her eyes brightening, and the pale rose tint deepening a little in her cheeks; "are you the Mr. Bacharach who painted that beautiful picture of Sister Helen at the last exhibition?"

"It's very kind of you to call it beautiful," said Elias, immensely surprised and flattered to find himself thus recognized by his work; especially flattered, because he spoke sincerely when he added, "I myself was discouraged about it. It's so entirely inadequate to the poem, you know."

"Why, it didn't seem so to me. On the contrary I never quite appreciated the poem till I saw your picture—never quite felt all the terror of it. I think you made it wonderfully vivid. I remember how she bent over the fire, and how fierce her eyes were, and how her hair streamed down her breast

and shoulders ; and then, the great, dark room, and the balcony, and the moonlight outside ! Oh, I liked the picture—I can't tell you how much."

"Well," broke in old Redwood, "you two seem to be old friends. I don't see as there was much use of my introducing you. But what I should like to know is, who was it a picture of ? Whose Sister Helen ?"

"Why, Rossetti's," explained Christine, laughing. "The heroine of one of Rossetti's poems."

"Oh, so," said the old man, with an inflection of disappointment.

"Are you fond of Rossetti, Miss Redwood ?" Elias asked. "I noticed you had his volume on the table, when I came in."

"Oh, I adore him. Don't you ? I think it's the most beautiful poetry that ever was written—though, to be sure, I haven't read all. But I don't know any body else that agrees with me—unless you do. Now, my father, for instance. I was reading one of the sonnets aloud to him this very evening—just before the bell rang. He—what do you suppose ? He laughed at it, and called it rubbish."

"I did, for a fact," admitted Redwood. "I can't get the hang of that rigmarol. It's too mixed up."

"Well, I don't pretend to understand every thing Rossetti has written," said Christine ; "not every single line. But that's my fault, not his. Sometimes he's so very deep. But the sonnet I read to you to-night—it was the one about work and will

awaking too late, to gaze upon their life sailed by, Mr. Bacharach—that wasn't the least bit difficult."

"Well," Redwood confessed, "I like a poet who talks the English language straight. Shakespeare's good enough for me, and Longfellow. But Chris, here, she goes in for all the modern improvements, especially poetry. One day I found her purse lying on the parlor table. Think, s's I, I'll open it, to put in a little surprise. By George, sir, it was stuffed out to bursting with slips of poetry cut from the newspapers! And then, æstheticism! Oscar-Wildism, I call it. She's caught that, I don't know where; and she's got it bad. Actually, she wanted me to disfigure the hard finish of these walls, here, with one of those new-fangled, æsthetic papers. But the Lord blessed me with some hard sense; and so we manage to keep things pretty much as they air."

"Air" was Redwood's way of pronouncing "are," when he wished to be emphatic.

"My father," observed Christine, "is a deep-dyed conservative, in music, literature, politics, art, and every thing else except costumes. In the matter of costumes, I believe, he's very nearly abreast of the times."

"Oh, you needn't except costumes," cried Redwood. "The science of costuming is a branch of archæology. So that don't count. But look at here, Chris. What you suppose Mr. Bacharach and I have just been talking about? Guess."

"About—? Oh, I can't guess. I give it up."

"About you."

"Me?"

"You."

"I hope he told you nothing bad about me, Mr. Bacharach."

"Oh, we weren't discussing your character. Men don't gossip, you know. We were talking about having your portrait painted. I've made arrangements with Mr. Bacharach to have him paint your portrait."

"Oh!" Christine exclaimed. Her brown eyes opened wide, and her cheeks reddened slightly.

"And the question is," Redwood pursued, "when will you give him the first sitting?"

"Why, that is for you to say, father."

"Well, then, I say Sunday morning. How does that strike *you*, Mr. Bacharach?"

"Oh, any time will be agreeable to me," replied Elias.

"Well, Chris, shall we make it Sunday morning?"

"Just as you please."

"All right. Note that, Mr. Bacharach. Sunday morning, December third. I suppose you'd better send your apparatus—easel, and so forth—in advance, hadn't ye?"

"Yes; I'll send them to-morrow."

"That settles it. And now, Chris, listen to me. I want to tell you a good joke. Perhaps you didn't notice, but when you were down to the shop this

afternoon, Mr. Bacharach here, he came in ; and he—" And to the unutterable confusion of Elias, the merciless old man proceeded to tell his daughter the whole story. He wound up thus : " And, actually, Chris, he took you to be an actress. What you scowling at me for ? He did, for a fact. He can't deny it. Didn't you, Mr. Bacharach ? Didn't you ask me if she wasn't an actress ? "

Elias appealed to Christine.

" Your father is very cruel, isn't he, Miss Redwood ? "

" He loves to tease," she assented. Then, with a touch of concern, " You mustn't feel badly. He never means to hurt anybody's feelings," she added, and looked earnestly into Elias Bacharach's face. That look caused him a sensation, the like of which he had never experienced before. His lip trembled. His breath quickened. His heart leaped. " Thank—thank you," he said, with none but the most confused notion of what he said, or why he said it.

Pretty soon he took his leave.

Elias dwelt in East Fifteenth Street. The house faced Stuyvesant Park. In this house, March 22, 1856, Elias had been born. In this house, May 13, 1856, Elias's father had died. In this house, alone with his mother and her brother, the Reverend Dr. Felix Gedaza, rabbi to the Congregation Gates of Pearl, Elias had lived till he was twenty-four years old. Then his mother, too, had died. Since then,

he and the rabbi had kept bachelor's hall. It was a large, old-fashioned, red-brick house, very plain and respectable of exterior, and very bare, sombre and silent within. Elias had converted the front room on the top floor into a studio. Thus he had a north light and a wide view. In his childhood this room had been his play-room. During his boyhood it had been his bed-room. Now it was his work-room—consequently his living-room, in the most vital sense of the word. Its four walls had watched him grow up. The view from its window had been his daily comrade, ever since he had been old enough to have any comrade at all. In a manner, it had been his confidant and his counselor, too. It was his habit, whenever he had any thing on his mind, to station himself at that window, and look off across the park, and think it out. Hither he had come in sickness and in health, in joy and in sorrow, in the blackest moments of his discouragement, in the brightest moments of his hope. Here he had solved many a doubt, confronted many a disappointment, built many an air-castle, registered many a vow. He was twenty-six years old. Not a phase or episode of his development, but was associated in his memory with that view.

Here, returning from Redwood's on the last night of November, 1882, he sat down, and abandoned himself to a whole set of new emotions that had been let loose in his heart. He did not understand these emotions ; he did not try to understand them. If he had understood them, he might have taken

measures to subdue them in their inception ; and then the whole course of his subsequent life would have been altered, and this story would never have been told. They were very vague, very strange, very different from any thing that he had ever experienced before, and very, very pleasant. As often as he went over the events of the evening, recalling Christine's appearance, and her manner, and the way she had looked at him, and the words that she had spoken, he became conscious of a sudden, delicious glow of warmth in his breast. Then, when he went forward into the time yet to come, and began to paint her portrait in imagination, he had to draw a long breath, a deep sigh of pleasure, so exhilarating and so fascinating was the outlook. By and by he was called back to the present, by the clock of St. George's church tolling out midnight. He started, rose, stretched himself, went to bed. But an hour or two elapsed before he got to sleep. Christine's golden hair and lustrous eyes lighted up his dreams.

III.

SUNDAY came ; and with it a warm sun, a blue sky, a soft, southerly breeze. It was one of those days, peculiar to our climate, which, though they may fall in the middle of winter, bear the fragrance of April upon their breath, and resuscitate for a moment in one's heart all the keen emotions dead

since last spring-time. Elias presented himself at the Redwood house shortly after nine o'clock. Christine smiled upon him, and gave him a warm little hand to press. Her father asked, "How about costume? Want her to make up?" Elias said, "Oh, no ; what she has on is perfect." That was a simple gown of some dark blue stuff, confined at the waist by a broad band of cardinal ribbon. Her golden hair was caught in a loose knot behind her ears. Elias set up his easel in the parlor. Then he began the process of posing the model. This called for nice discrimination, and was productive of much mirthful debate. At last it was finished.

"Now," said old Redwood, "this is altogether too fine a day for me to spend cooped up in the house. I'll leave you two young folks to take care of each other. I'm going to read my newspaper in the park. Sunday don't come more than once a week, you understand. By-by, Chris. So long, Mr. Bacharach."

He went off.

For a while Elias worked in silence. So great was the pleasure that he got from studying this young girl's beauty, and endeavoring to transfer the elements of it to his canvas, that he never thought of how heavily the time might lag for her. But all at once it occurred to him.

"Why," he reflected, "I'm treating her for all the world as if she were a paid model. This won't do. I must try to amuse her."

Then he sought high and low for something to say, something that would be at once appropriate and entertaining. In vain. His wits seemed to have deserted him, his mind to have become a total and hopeless blank. In order readily and happily to manufacture polite conversation, one must have had experience. Elias had had none. Now, in despair, he saw himself reduced to taking refuge in the weather.

"This—er—has been an unusually mild fall, Miss Redwood," he ventured.

"Yes, very," she acquiesced.

"But the summer—that was a scorcher, wasn't it?"

"Yes, indeed, dreadful," she assented.

"You spent it in the country, I suppose?"

"Oh, no; we staid in the city."

"Ah, did you? So did I."

"Indeed?"

"Yes."

He waited for her to go on, but she did not go on. With a sense of deep discouragement, he concluded that he had entered a cul-de-sac. He must begin anew, and upon another topic.

Presently, "I hope you are not getting tired," he said. "Don't hesitate to rest as often as you like."

"Oh, thank you, no; I'm not tired yet," she answered.

"Generally," he announced, standing off, closing one eye, and taking an observation over the end of his crayon, "generally people who aren't used to it,

find sitting very irksome ; and even regular models, whose business it is, want to get up every now and then, and stretch themselves. But the painter himself never wearies."

"Because he is so interested in his work, I suppose?"

"Yes, of course. Why, sometimes, of a summer day, I've painted for thirteen or fourteen hours at a stretch—from dawn till sunset—and then only been sorry that I could paint no more."

"It must be delightful to have an occupation like that—one that is a constant source of pleasure. It's the same, isn't it, with all kinds of artists—with musicians and sculptors?"

"Yes, and writers. I know a man who is a writer—writes stories and poems and that sort of thing—and his wife says she has to use main force to get him to leave his manuscripts. Writers have the advantage of painters in one respect—they don't need daylight. Indeed, I think many of them like lamp-light better. The lamp is sort of emblematic of their calling, just as the palette is of ours. I have read somewhere of quite a celebrated novelist—I forget his name—an Englishman, I believe—who shuts his blinds, and lights the gas, and works by gaslight even in broad day. That's curious, isn't it?"

"And foolish, besides ; because they say it's very unhealthful and very bad for the eyes. I should think his novels would be awfully morbid."

"I used to paint by gaslight when I was at the

League. But I don't any more. It doesn't pay. In the daytime your colors all look false and unwholesome—hectic—as if they had the consumption. Of course, if you're merely sketching, or working in black and white, it's different."

"Did you study at the League?"

"Yes; and also under Stainar, in his studio."

"Stainar? At Paris?"

"Oh, no; in New York. What little I know I have learned here in New York."

"Why, I thought every body had to study abroad—at Paris or Munich or Düsseldorf."

"They don't exactly *have* to. You can get very good instruction here. Stainar is a capital master; and there are others. Of course, it's desirable to study abroad, too. But I couldn't very well. I have never been further than fifty or a hundred miles from this city in my life."

"Why, how strange! I haven't either. But then, I'm a girl. You're a man. I should think you would have traveled."

"It was on account of my mother. She was a great stay-at-home; and I never felt like leaving her. Since her death—two years ago—I haven't had any wish to travel. I haven't had the heart for it."

After a little pause, Christine asked softly, "Have you any brothers or sisters?"

"No, none. And my father died when I was a baby. So, except for me, my mother was quite

alone. To be sure, she had my uncle, the rabbi ; but he's not much company."

"Oh, have you an uncle who is a rabbi?"

"Yes—Dr. Gedaza, of the Congregation Gates of Pearl, in Seventeenth Street."

"How interesting ! Tell me, what is he like?"

"Why, I don't know. How do you mean?"

"What does he look like? And his character?"

"Well, he's a little old gentleman, a widower. He wears spectacles, and he's got a bald head. He knows an awful lot of theology, but in point of worldly wisdom he's as deficient as a child. Sometimes he's fairly good-natured, sometimes very severe. Generally he's absent-minded—up in the clouds."

"Has he a long white beard?"

"He has a beard ; but it's neither long nor white. It's short and black—though there may be a few white hairs scattered through it. There ought to be, considering his age. He's— Let me see. He's ten years older than my mother ; and she was thirty years older than I. That would make him sixty-six."

"I have never seen a rabbi ; but I always thought they had long white beards, and wore gowns, and looked mysterious and awe-inspiring, like astrologers or alchemists."

"There's nothing mysterious about my uncle," said Elias, laughing, "unless it be his prodigious learning ; and nothing awe-inspiring, except his temper. That's pretty quick. He wears an or-

dinary black coat and white cravat, like a Protestant minister's. You'd take him for a Protestant minister if you should pass him in the street."

"And he isn't at all patriarchal or picturesque?"

"Alas, no; not that I have been able to discover."

"Oh, dear; how disappointing!"

After another little pause, Christine said: "I haven't any brothers or sisters, either; and my mother died when I was three years old; and my father is a great home-body, too. Isn't it strange that our lives should have been so much alike? Only, you're a man and an artist; and I'm a girl and have nothing to do but to keep house. I wish I loved housekeeping as you do painting. But I don't; I hate it."

"That's too bad. But then, it doesn't take up all your time, and it doesn't cause you such an endless deal of worry and discouragement as painting does. You have plenty of time left in which to read, and see your friends, and enjoy life."

"Oh, no, I don't. You have no idea how many miserable little things there are to be done. And we only keep one servant. And she's so stupid that I have to be standing over her all day long. It's like a regular business—almost."

She had thrown a good deal of feeling into these utterances; had emphasized them by bending forward, and lifting her face toward her hearer's; and by this time she was completely out of pose.

Didn't she think she'd like to rest a little now? Elias asked.

She thought she *would* like to, for a few minutes, she said; and getting up, she crossed over and looked at Elias's canvas. All she could see were a few straggling charcoal lines.

"Oh," she queried, "is that the way you begin?"

"Yes; I must sketch every thing in in black, first."

"But how long will that take?"

"That depends upon how often you let me come."

"Well, if you come every Sunday?"

"Oh, it will take three or four weeks—may be more."

"And then, how long before the picture will be finished?"

"I can't tell exactly; but if we only have one sitting a week, probably not till spring."

"Oh," she said, and said it with an inflection which Elias construed to be that of disappointment.

"Why, did you wish to have it finished earlier?" he asked.

"Oh, no; I don't care about that. I wasn't thinking of that," she answered, but still with an inflection which made Elias feel that her contentment had been disturbed. He wondered whether he had said any thing indiscreet, any thing to hurt or to offend her. He could remember nothing.

She resumed her pose. He could not have told what it was, but there was something in her bearing

which prompted him to ask : " Is the position uncomfortable ? " and to urge : " Don't sit any more to-day, if you would rather not. "

" Oh, no ; the position isn't uncomfortable. I'd just as soon sit, " was her reply, in the same unhappy tone of voice.

Now, what could the matter be ? What had happened to annoy her ?

" Please, Miss Redwood, " Elias pleaded, " please be frank with me. Perhaps I am keeping you from something ? "

Her eyes were fixed dreamily upon the window-pane behind his shoulder.

" I was only thinking, " she confessed in a slow, pensive manner, " of what a beautiful day it is, and that " — She stopped herself.

" And that — "

" That's all. Nothing else. "

" Oh, yes, there was. Please tell me. And that — ? "

" And that — now the winter is upon us — that we shan't have many more like it. There. "

" Ah, I see ! And you were longing to be out of doors, enjoying it. No wonder. "

She colored up and began protesting.

" Oh, really, Mr. Bacharach ; no, indeed — "

" Oh, yes, you were. No use denying it. And so far as I'm concerned, I've done a good morning's work already. And, I propose that we go and join your father in the park — if you know where to find him ? "

"Oh, yes, I know where to find him. Shall I put on my things? One sitting, more or less—if it's going to take so very, very long—won't count, will it?"

A few moments later they had entered the park, and were sauntering down a sunlit pathway. Christine's hair glowed like a web of fine flames. Roses bloomed in her cheeks. Her eyes sparkled. She vowed that there had never before been such a delicious day. How soft the air was, and yet how crisp! How sweet it smelled! How exquisitely the leafless branches of the trees, gilded by the sunshine, were penciled against the deep blue of the sky! The sunshine transfigured every thing. What rich and varied colors it brought out upon the landscape! What reds, what purples, what yellows! Had Mr. Bacharach ever seen any thing equal to it? Was it not a keen pleasure merely to breathe, merely to exist, upon such a day? By and by they turned a corner, and came upon a bench.

"Oh," exclaimed Christine, halting abruptly, "he's not here."

"Who?" Elias asked.

"Why, my father."

"Oh, to be sure; I had forgotten."

"This is his favorite bench. He always sits here. Now, what can have become of him?"

"Perhaps he has walked on a little."

"I suppose he has. But he can't have gone far. He never does. We'll soon overtake him."

At the end of another quarter hour, however, they had not yet overtaken him.

"I'm afraid we've missed him," she said ; "though it's very strange, because he never goes anywhere else, but just in this direction. I think we may as well give up the search. But I'm a little tired, and would you mind sitting down and resting for a moment before turning back ? "

"I should like nothing better ; only, I must warn you that I haven't the remotest notion how we are to find our way out of here. The paths we have taken have been so crooked, I've entirely lost my reckoning."

"Ah, but I—I know the park by heart. I could find my way anywhere in it, blindfold, I think."

"Indeed ? How did you get so well acquainted ? "

"Oh, we've lived within a stone's throw of it all my life. When I was a little girl I used to play here. Then I had to cross it twice a day, when I went to the Normal College. And since then I've made a practice of taking long walks here every afternoon. There's scarcely a tree or stone that I'm not familiar with ; and I've discovered lots of delightful little places—nooks and corners—that nobody else suspects the existence of. Sometime I'd like to show you some of them. They'd be splendid to paint."

By this time they were seated.

"Oh, thank you," said Elias, "that will be

charming. And so, you went to the Normal College ? ”

“ Yes ; I graduated there last spring. ”

“ Graduated ! Why, I shouldn't have thought you were old enough ! ”

“ How old do you think I am ? ”

“ Seventeen ? ”

“ Oh, ever so much older. Guess again. ”

“ Eighteen, then ? ”

“ I'll be nineteen in January—January third—just one month from to-day. ”

“ Mercy ! You're very venerable, to be sure. And then, having graduated from the Normal College, what an immense deal of wisdom you must possess, too ! ”

She laughed as gayly as though he had perpetrated a rare witticism ; and then said, “ No, seriously, I never learned much at the Normal College—I mean in the classes—except a lot of mathematics and Latin, which I've forgotten all about now. I learned a little from the other girls, though. Some of them were wonderfully intelligent and cultivated ; and they put me on the track of good books and such things. Shall we start home now ? ” (They rose and began to retrace their steps.) “ Tell me, Mr. Bacharach, what is the one book which you like best of all ? ”

“ That's rather a hard question. Suppose I were to put it to you, could you answer it ? ”

“ Oh, yes. I think ‘ Adam Bede ’ is the greatest book that was ever written. ”

"That's saying a vast deal, isn't it?"

"Well, of course, I mean the greatest book of its kind—the most vivid and truthful picture of real deep feeling. I wasn't thinking of scientific books, or essays, or histories, like Spencer, or Emerson, or Macaulay. I mean, it pierces deeper into the heart, than any other book that I have read."

"Have you ever read 'Wilhelm Meister'?"

"No. I was going to, though. One of the girls lent me a copy—Carlyle's translation. She said it was splendid. But when my father saw it he made me give it back. He holds very old-fashioned ideas of literature, you know; and he says that Goethe is demoralizing. His taste in music is old-fashioned, too. He never *will* take me to hear good music. It bores him dreadfully. He likes to go to grand sacred concerts on Sunday evening, where they play Strauss and Offenbach, and then at the end 'Home, Sweet Home.' Strauss and Offenbach and even 'Home, Sweet Home' are very well of their kind; but one tires of them after a while, don't you think so? I haven't been at a Symphony or Philharmonic for more than a year."

"Why don't you go to the rehearsals?"

"Why, he won't take me to the rehearsals, any more than to the concerts."

"But you can go to them alone. They're in the afternoon."

"Oh, but I can't bear to hear music alone. I must have somebody with me, or else I don't enjoy it at all. I always want somebody to nudge, when the music is especially thrilling; don't you?"

"Yes, one longs for a sympathetic neighbor," Elias admitted ; and thought in his own soul, "I wish the old man would deputize me ; it must be exceedingly pleasant to be nudged by her little elbow."

When they had reached the house, Christine asked him whether he wouldn't come in for a little while ; and he replied that he guessed he would, for the purpose of putting away his paraphernalia, which he had left cluttering up the parlor. Inside they found old Redwood, who explained that he had departed from his custom that morning, and chosen quite a different quarter of the park for his outing. Elias stowed his things under the piano. As he was doing so, a bell rang below stairs.

"Dinner," announced the old man. "Come, Mr. Bacharach."

Elias began to make his excuses.

"Oh, none o' that !" the old man cried, grasping Elias's arm. "Come down and take pot-luck ; and may good digestion wait on appetite."

Pretty soon Elias found himself installed at Redwood's table, with Christine beaming upon him from one end, and the old man carving a turkey at the other.

"Well, I declare, Chris, this is quite jolly, ain't it ? To have company to dinner ! We two—she and I, Mr. Bacharach—we generally dine alone ; and as we've told each other about all either of us knows, time and time again, we don't find it particularly lively ; do we, Chris ? Now, Mr. Bach-

arach, I know that you Israelites—excuse me—you foreigners—don't drink ice-water with your meals ; but as I haven't got any wine to offer you, I'll send out for some beer. Mary !”

The maid appeared ; and old Redwood instructed her to purchase a quart of beer at the corner liquor store.

“ You'll have to go in by the side-door, Mary, because it's Sunday. And if any policeman should ask what you've got in the pitcher, tell him it's milk. Don't be afraid. If he takes you up, I'll go bail for you. Ha-ha-ha !”

“ *Father !*” cried Christine, with a glance at once beseeching and reproachful.

“ Beer,” the old man continued, moderating his hilarity, and adopting a commentative tone, “ beer is a great drink, mild, refreshing, wholesome. And it's done a sight of good for temperance, too—more than all your total abstinence orators and blue-ribbonites put together. I'm very fond of it, and always drink it with my lunch, down-town. There's a saloon just under my shop. But Chris there, she can't abide it, on account of the bitter. She likes wine—and wine—not being a capitalist—I call an extravagance.”

“ Yes,” said Christine, “ I think wine is perfectly delicious ; and so pretty to look at, with its deep red or yellow. Once a friend of father's sent us a whole box of wine—Rhine wine—and——”

“ And,” old Redwood interrupted, “ and that innocent appearing young woman there, sir, she dis-

posed of every blessed drop of it ; she did, for a fact. What do you think of that ? ”

“ Oh, father,” protested Christine, blushing beautifully, “ you ought not to say such a thing. Mr. Bacharach might believe you.”

“ Well, any how, I wish we had some of it left to offer you, Mr. Bacharach,” said Redwood. “ But here comes the beer.”

“ Oh, by the way,” put in Elias, addressing himself to Christine, “ did you know ? They’re going to give the ‘ Damnation of Faust ’ at the Symphony rehearsal Friday afternoon—the great work of Berlioz. Have you ever heard it ? ”

“ No ; but I have heard selections from it. I wish ”—bringing her eyes to bear upon her father—“ I wish I could go.”

“ Well, why don’t ye ? Who’s to prevent ye ? ”

“ Will you take me ? ”

“ Not I. But, Great Scott, what’s the use of being a pretty young girl if you’ve got to drag your aged father around after you ? Why don’t you get some young man ? I’ll bet there are twenty young fellows in this town, who’d only be too glad. But she, Mr. Bacharach, she scares them all away, with her high and mighty manners. She’s too particular. She’ll die an old maid, mark my words.”

Elias caught a glimpse of a golden opportunity.

“ I wish, Miss Redwood, I wish you would go with me,” he ventured, a little timidly, and waited anxiously for her response.

"There you are, Chris!" cried her father. "There's your chance! But"—turning to Elias—"but she won't. You see if she will."

"Oh, thank you, Mr. Bacharach? That's lovely. I'll go with the very greatest pleasure."

Her eyes lighted up; and leaving her seat, she ran around the table, and deposited a wholly irrelevant kiss upon her father's forehead.

"Ha-ha-ha!" laughed that gentleman, clapping his hands. "You're the first young fellow I've seen, Mr. Bacharach, who she thought was good enough for her. By George, Chris, there's hope for you, after all."

"Oh," cried Christine, "I'm so glad. I never wanted any thing more in my life, than I did to hear the—the—it sounds awfully profane, doesn't it?—'Damnation of Faust.'"

"Well, now," said the old man, "there's nothing like killing two birds with one stone. So what I propose is this: I propose that you come up here Friday forenoon, Mr. Bacharach; and then you can work for a while at her portrait. Afterward she'll give you a bite of lunch—won't ye, Chris?—and you can tote her off to the concert. By the way, where does it take place? At the Academy?"

"No; at Steinway Hall."

"And when does it let out?"

"At about half-past four, I think."

"All right. Then I'll meet you at the door when it's over—my shop, you know, is just around the corner—I'll meet you at the door and save you the

trouble of bringing her home. How does that suit, eh ? ”

“ Very well,” said Elias ; but he thought that he should not have minded the trouble of bringing her home.

When he returned to the quiet, dark house on Stuyvesant Square, late that afternoon, he sat down at the big window of his studio, and went over the happenings of the day. He felt wonderfully light-hearted, wonderfully elated, as though he had drunken of some subtle stimulant. What a pleasant, interesting city New York was, after all ! How thoroughly one could enjoy one’s self in it ! The noises of it, mingling in a confused, continuous rumble, and falling upon his ears, sounded like the voice of a good old friend. It was an old friend’s face that greeted him, as he looked out upon the bare trees in the park. Every now and then he drew a deep, tremulous, audible breath. The colors faded from the sky. Dusk gathered. The bell of St. George’s Church rang to vespers. The street lamps were lighted. It got dark. Elias did not stir.

“ Oh, what a sweet, natural, beautiful girl ! ” he was soliloquizing. “ And what a rough old bear of a father ! And what—what a heavenly time we’ll have on Friday ! ”

He marveled at himself, it gave him such a swift, exultant thrill to think of Friday ; but the obvious psychological explanation of it, he never once suspected.

IV.

TOWARD the close of Friday's sitting Elias said: "You know, Berlioz has taken great liberties with Goethe's text—quite altered the story, indeed, and given it an ending to suit himself."

"That won't matter much to me," responded Christine, "because I've never read 'Faust,' and I have only the vaguest notion of what the story is."

"Did it suffer a like fate to 'Wilhelm Meister's?'"

"No; but I can't read German, and I didn't know whether there was any good translation. Is there?"

"Oh, yes; Bayard Taylor's is beautiful. You ought to read it."

"Then, besides, I had an idea that it was very deep and obscure—very hard to understand. Do you think I could understand it?"

"I'm sure you could—all that's essential. You could get the story and the human nature. I believe you'd find it even more moving than 'Adam Bede.'"

"Can't you tell me the story? Won't you tell it to me now?"

"Oh, I should only spoil it."

But Christine begged him to give her the outline of it, pleading that she would enjoy the music so much more intelligently if she were not altogether

ignorant of the plot. So, during their luncheon, Elias related as best he could something of the love-story of Faust and Margaret. Christine listened with bated breath, and wide eyes fastened upon his face ; and at its conclusion she drew a profound sigh, and murmured : " Oh, how sad, how sad ! "

" Now," said Elias, " I must explain how Berlioz has tampered with it." Which he proceeded to do.

They walked as far as Seventh Avenue and Fifty-ninth Street, where they took the University Place car. Elias thought he had never been so happy. It was an exhilaration merely to share this young girl's presence, breathing the same air that she breathed. The sunshine caught new radiance from her hair. Lambent fires burned in her eyes. There was no music that Elias would rather have heard, than the music of her voice as she talked to him. They had the car to themselves for the first few blocks ; but then it began to fill up with ladies, and at last chivalry compelled Elias to sacrifice his seat at Christine's side. He clung to the strap in front of her, and looked down at her ; and she looked up at him ; and so, with their glances, they communed together, very rarely opening their lips, until, having reached Fourteenth Street, it behooved them to dismount.

The music began. Christine sat forward in her chair, and listened with manifest appreciation. But she made no sign to her companion till the musicians had played, and the chorus sung, the first bar or two of the " Peasants' Rondo." Then

she turned upon him suddenly, with eyes dilated and lips apart, and drew a quick breath, and uttered an ecstatic little "*Oh!*" The syllable sped straight to his heart, and started an unfamiliar palpitation there. From that moment until the concert was terminated, both of these young people were in Heaven; she, thanks to the marvelous music, which seized hold of her, and bore her away, like a blossom upon its bosom: he, thanks to the beautiful girl who was seated next to him, and whose eyes kept smiling into his, and whose breath for one priceless second fell upon his cheek. Every most trifling incident of that afternoon somehow engraved itself upon Elias Bacharach's memory. Long afterward he recalled it all: how Christine was dressed, the shape of her bonnet, the color of her gloves, the fragrance of the rose that she wore in her breast; how he had wrapped her cloak about her shoulders when she complained of a draught; how she had beat time with her fan when the students sang their drinking song, and laughed when Brander sang the ballad of the rat, and looked grave when Gretchen sang "*There was a King in Thule,*" and started, and paled, and caught her breath, and put her hand impulsively upon Elias's arm, when Faust and Mephistopheles began their tempestuous ride into hell. He remembered it all, in exceeding bitterness of spirit. He would have followed Faust's example, and pledged his soul to eternal bondage, gladly, eagerly, if by doing so he could have

won back the possibilities of that vanished afternoon.

Old Redwood met them, as he had promised, on the curbstone in front of the exit.

"You'd better come up town and dine with us, Mr. Bacharach," he said.

"Oh, yes ; do, please," urged Christine.

"I wish I could," said Elias ; "but, unfortunately, I must go home. The concert has lasted longer than I thought it would ; and now they—my uncle, I mean—will be expecting me at home. Good-by."

Christine gave him her hand. He watched her till she was lost to sight in the crowd. It had cost him a pang to separate himself from her. Now, as he saw her departing further and further away, it was like the gradual extinction of the light and the warmth and the beauty of the day. His heart sank. A lump began to gather and ache in his throat. He turned about and walked slowly home.

Crossing his own threshold, he shivered, as one might upon entering a tomb. Somehow, his house seemed darker, bleaker, bigger, and more cheerless than it had ever seemed before. It was, as it always was, intensely silent. His footstep upon the marble floor of the hallway resounded sharp and metallic. He joined the rabbi in the latter's study. They exchanged a few quiet words of greeting, and then sat motionless, without speaking, as though waiting for something to happen. The daylight slowly faded. By and by a star could be made out, shim-

mering through the window. Both of these men rose to their feet, and put on their hats. The rabbi lighted a candle, and, with hands uplifted, intoned a blessing over it in Hebrew. With the candle flame he lighted the gas. Then, picking up a bulky calf-bound volume from the table, he began to read aloud from the Torah, also in Hebrew. Elias paid scant heed. He heard the rabbi's voice rise and fall in sonorous periods ; but his heart and his mind were elsewhere.

"Now, Elias," said the rabbi suddenly, "you read on from where I have left off."

He handed Elias the book, pointing with his finger to the place. Elias took it, and read mechanically, pronouncing the words clearly enough, but giving no attention to the sense :

"'And when the Lord thy God shall deliver them before thee, thou shalt smite them and utterly destroy them ; thou shalt make no covenant with them, nor show mercy unto them. Neither shalt thou make marriages with them ; thy daughter thou shalt not give unto his son, nor his daughter shalt thou take unto thy son. For they will turn away thy son from following me, that they may serve other gods ; so will the anger of the Lord be kindled against you, and destroy thee suddenly. But thus shall ye deal with them : Ye shall destroy their altars, and break down their images, and cut down their groves, and burn their graven images with fire. For thou art an holy people unto the Lord thy God : the Lord thy God hath chosen thee

to be a special people unto himself, above all people that are upon the face of the earth.' " *

" 'Above all people that are upon the face of the earth,' " echoed the rabbi. "Amen."

With the melancholy December nightfall had come the Jewish Sabbath.

V.

THOUGH nothing had been said about it, Elias took for granted that the Redwoods would expect him Sunday morning; and accordingly, in the neighborhood of nine o'clock, he rang their door-bell. He found them ready for him. Old Redwood sat behind him as he worked at the portrait, and conversation was general throughout. They asked him to stay to dinner, but he was afraid of abusing his welcome, and declined. He went home, shut himself up in his studio, and spent the afternoon thinking regretfully of the good time that he might have been having if he had only accepted.

The first post Monday morning brought him a ticket for the private view of the Academy exhibition to be given that evening. The ticket said, "Admit Mr. E. Bacharach and one." Elias went to his writing-desk, and, on the spur of his impulse, wrote the following note:

* Deuteronomy, vii., 2-6.

"No. — EAST FIFTEENTH STREET, MONDAY.

"MY DEAR MISS REDWOOD :—I wonder whether you would care to attend the private view of the coming exhibition this evening? There will no doubt be quite an interesting lot of people there, not to mention the pictures; and perhaps it might amuse you to look in for an hour or so. If you will say yes, I shall be very glad.

"Yours sincerely,

"ELIAS BACHARACH."

This he inclosed in an envelope, and addressed. Then he sallied forth to the nearest messenger office, and had it sent. Then he returned to his studio to await her answer.

But pretty soon he began to repent what he had done. Surely, upon such brief acquaintance, he had taken too great a liberty. What sort of an opinion would she have of him? Of course, she would say no to his invitation. Oh that he could recall the note—the rash, impetuous note! It was too late to do that; and now he must suffer the consequence of his indiscretion, which would at least be a fall of great distance in her esteem. She would regard him as presumptuous and pushing. She would laugh at him to herself, and with her father, to whom most likely she would show what he had written. Perhaps she would imagine that he was in love with her—girls are notorious for imagining such ridiculous things upon such slight provocation. He, certainly, would never

have the hardihood to look her straight in the face again. He walked up and down the floor. Why didn't the messenger bring her answer? Though he knew, or thought he knew, that it would be a snub and a refusal, he was anxious to get it, all the same. Would the boy never come? Was he purposely delaying? Taking a malicious delight in making his employer wait? Stopping upon some street-corner to spin his top? Or—or had she simply disdained to vouchsafe to his request any reply whatever?—Ah! The door-bell! Elias's heart jumped into his mouth. He stepped into the hall, leaned over the banister, and listened.

He heard the maid undo the chain, and open the door. There was an interval of silence. Then he heard her shut it. Then, in a voice tense for excitement, "Maggie," he called, "is it something for me?"

"Yes, sir; a note."

He ran down stairs, and met the servant half-way. She gave him the note. "Mr. Elias Bacharach, No. — East Fifteenth Street, N. Y. C.," was its superscription, in a pretty, girlish hand. The paper had a faint, sweet smell—something like jasmine, something like mignonnette. He carried it back to his studio, unopened. There, having closed the door, he went to his window, drew a long breath, and with trembling fingers broke the seal. Could he believe his senses? Christine's note ran thus:

"DEAR MR. BACHARACH:—Thanks ever so

much, and I shall be delighted to go. I have always wanted to go to a private view, but have never been. I hope there are some of your pictures to be seen ; are there? You don't tell me at what hour to expect you ; but I'll be ready at half-past seven.

Sincerely yours,

“CHRISTINE REDWOOD.”

Elias's cheeks burned, his fingers trembled, his temples throbbed, he could feel the blood leap in his veins, as the meaning of this document became apparent to his mind. He read it again and again. He brought it close to his face, and breathed the dainty perfume it exhaled. The pleasure he derived from doing this was wholly disproportionate to the sweetness of the scent. By and by he put it back in its envelope, and deposited it in the drawer of his desk. But he did not leave it there long. In a little while he had it out, and was reading it again, and again inhaling its perfume—which, faint to begin with, had now almost quite evaporated. Still, enough of it remained to send an electric tingle along his nerves, and to cast a wonderfully vivid image of Christine upon the retina of his mind's eye. For the rest of that day he was incompetent. He could not paint. He could not read. He could not sit still. He could only roam listlessly from place to place, and wonder whether half-past seven would ever arrive.

At twenty minutes past seven precisely, as he learned from his watch, he found himself at the

foot of Redwood's stoop. No : he had traveled on the speed of his desire ; it would not do to be beforehand. The ten eternal minutes that lay between him and the appointed time he would while away by walking around the block. He walked slowly, trying to calculate just how many seconds, or fractions of a second, were consumed by each step. At last he had regained his starting point. He mounted the stoop, and rang the bell.

The parlor was empty. Elias picked up Christine's volume of Rossetti, and absent-mindedly turned the pages. Oh, at what a break-neck pace his arteries were beating.

Hark ! He heard a light footstep coming down the stairs. He rose. All at once, it seemed to him, there was a burst of sunlight and oxygen. She had entered. She was standing before him, smiling and bidding him welcome. She had on a tiny bonnet of dark red velvet, under which her golden hair, and her lily-white forehead, and her deep brown eyes, shone at their best. She carried her wrap over her arm—a fur-lined circular. In her left hand she held her gloves. Her right she gave to Elias. His heart fluttered to the verge of fainting as he touched it. How small it was ; how warm and soft ! How confidently it seemed to nestle in his ! By a mighty effort he subdued an impulse to carry it to his lips and kiss it. He had no idea of letting it go, and perhaps would have continued to hold it to this day, if she by and by had not drawn it away.

"Here are a couple of roses," he said, handing her a tissue-paper parcel.

She took them, and marveled at their loveliness. She fastened one to her dress, and forced him to wear the other in the lapel of his coat. She stood on tip-toe and pinned it there. The trimming of her bonnet brushed his cheek. It was an instant of intoxication. He wondered whether she could hear his heart beat.

"It was kind of you to say that you would go. I was afraid you might not care to," he began.

"On the contrary, it was kind of you to ask me. I am very glad."

She sat down, and drew on her gloves. He saw that she was having difficulty in buttoning one of them.

"Can't I help you?" he asked.

Then he held her hand, and buttoned her glove for her, and breathed the incense that rose from the flower at her breast. Then he wrapped her in her circular; and they left the house. He offered her his arm. Her little hand perched like a bird upon it.

"I am so happy," he said softly, and immediately regretted that he had said it.

"So am I," she said, still more softly; and straightway his regret died.

He looked into her eyes. Far down in them palpitated a mystic, tender light. Elias had to bite his tongue to keep from telling her then and there that he loved her.

At the exhibition he pointed out the distinguished people to her, and showed her the pictures which he thought were the best, and was happy, happy, happy. Now and then somebody would nod and say : "How d'ye do, Bacharach?" and cast an admiring glance at his companion, which stirred his pride. Once a gentleman stopped and spoke a few words to Christine, and won a smile from her, which pricked his jealousy. He feared that it was not at all the proper thing to do, but he could not help asking, "A friend of yours?" "Oh, no," she answered; "only our old drawing teacher at the Normal College." At that he was happy again. She wanted him to lead her straight to his own picture at once. By and by they had reached it. The subject was "The Song of Deborah." The prophetess was represented as a woman of about fifty years of age, tall, stalwart, imperious-looking, with iron-gray hair, steel-blue eyes, and a head of stern and majestic beauty. Christine thought the coloring was superb, and, "Where did you ever find such a wonderful face?" she asked. "It is a face to make you afraid, it's so strong, so proud; and yet it is a face that you could not help loving; there is something so *good* about it. Oh, I like it the best of all the pictures here." Elias felt that he had not worked in vain.

There was a great crush of people, and the air was close and hot, and the few seats where one might rest one's self were all occupied; so presently Elias asked whether she wasn't tired, and she

confessed that she was—a little ; and they left the building.

“ Now,” said he, “ it’s still early, and I for one am ravenously hungry.”

“ Oh, are you ? That’s too bad,” was her guileless response. “ But at home I shall be able to give you ”—timidly—“ some—some cold turkey.”

“ No,” he said, “ I shan’t put you to that trouble. Let’s go to a restaurant.”

And he led her to Delmonico’s.

There, the momentous question, what they had better order, occasioned much grave debate, and resulted finally in the selection of a sweet-bread garnished by green peas. Elias thought that Beaune would be the wine best adapted to moistening a sweet-bread, and accordingly Beaune was brought, as Christine remarked curiously, “ in a little basket.” She applied herself to the edibles with undisguised relish ; but all at once, pausing and looking reproachfully at Elias, she exclaimed, “ Why, you said you were ravenously hungry, and now you’re not eating a thing ! ” Indeed, she spoke the truth. His knife and fork lay unemployed beside his plate ; and he was doing nothing but gaze at her with fond, caressing eyes.

“ Oh, I forgot,” he said, and began to eat and drink.

They chatted busily during the repast—about the people who came and went, about the marvelous toilets of some of the ladies, about the decorations of the restaurant, about the haughty mien and

supercilious manner of the French gentleman in evening dress who served them, about the view of electric-lighted Madison Square that they got through the window at which they were established—about a thousand trifles. Afterward Elias preserved but a very dim remembrance of the words that they had spoken. He preserved a very vivid one of Christine's appearance—of how her eyes had glowed beneath her red bonnet, of how the rose he had given her had shone like a spot of flame in her bosom—and of the bliss that he had experienced in sitting opposite her, and watching the varying expressions of her face, hearkening to the varying modulations of her voice, and realizing that she was trusting herself entirely to his protection.

Again by and by he had the privilege of helping her on with her circular, and of buttoning her glove. They got into a street car to go up town. The first half of that journey Elias found delightful. They had to sit very close together, to make room for other passengers; and all the while Elias was conscious of the touch of her shoulder upon his arm. But, as he saw the end drawing near, and knew that the moment was not far off when he would have to leave her, his spirits began to sink. Why could not the distance be doubled, trebled? What possessed the driver to race his horses so? Surely, street car had never covered its tracks at such reckless speed before. He rang her door-bell for her, and tried to harden himself to the thought

that in another minute he would have to say good-by.

Old Redwood himself answered the door-bell.

"Come in for a moment, Mr. Bacharach, and get thawed out," he said.

Elias breathed freely. Here was a reprieve, at any rate. They went into the back parlor, and gathered around a cheerful grate fire. Christine gave her father an account of the evening's doings. At last Elias screwed his courage up, and tore himself away. Christine went with him to the vestibule. He got hold of her hand, and clung to it for the entire five minutes that it took him to pronounce his valedictory.

Body burning, brain whirling, as if with fever, he walked home. A wild joy trembled in his heart; a wild pain, too. He loved her. To-night, at last, for the first time, he had recognized this very palpable and patent fact. He loved her. There could be no doubt about it. With a sensation of genuine surprise, the simple fellow acknowledged to himself that he loved her—with genuine surprise and consternation. Perhaps some time she might love him a little in return. But even so, he knew that between her and himself there yawned a gulf, fathomless and impassable; and in spite of his desire and his passion, he cried out, "God forbid!"

He let himself into the house with his latch-key. Through the glass door of his uncle's study, at the end of the hall, he could see that a light was still

burning within. He threw off his hat and overcoat, and marched into the rabbi's presence.

"How that good man would start," he thought, "if he should guess!"

VI.

THE rabbi's study was a bare enough apartment, furnished with a faded carpet, three or four chairs, and a writing table. The walls and ceiling were kalsomined in slate color, the former being lined half-way up with book shelves. A student's lamp, with a green shade, burned on the table. The oil in it must have been pretty low, for it shed but a dim light, and gave off a strong, offensive odor. The rabbi sat with his back to the door, bending over what looked like a manuscript sermon. The top of the rabbi's head was perfectly bald, and it reflected the lamplight like a surface of polished ivory. His little remaining hair and his beard were bluish black. His eyes, behind thick spectacles, were black, too—small, deep-set, bright, restless black beads. But his skin was intensely white, as white almost as the clerical collar that encircled his throat, and it looked as though it would feel chilly to the touch, like marble. The rabbi was a very little man, short of stature, spare of habit, with a frame and with features as slender and as delicate as a maiden's. Yet he had not at all the appearance of a weakling. You felt at once

the presence of a strong will and of an active, if not enlightened or profound, intelligence. You felt the presence of a person who could, if he chose, be sufficiently good-natured, but who possessed also the capacity of becoming as hard and as cold as ice.

At his nephew's entrance the rabbi glanced over his shoulder.

"Ah, Elias," he asked, in a tone which, though amiable, denoted very little interest, "where do you come from?"

"The Academy of Design. I've been at the exhibition."

"So? Have you any pictures there?"

"Only one. 'The Song of Deborah.'"

"Ah! Is it well hung?"

"Oh, yes—on the line."

"That's good. Some day I must drop in and see it."

On both sides the dialogue had been perfunctory. Now there befell a silence. The rabbi returned to his reading. Elias sank upon a chair, thrust his hands deep into his trousers pockets, and fixed his eyes upon the carpet. For a while the ticking of the clock on the mantelpiece was the only sound.

All at once Elias said: "Oh, yes—I forgot—I've been at Delmonico's, too."

"Ah," rejoined the rabbi, "eating *trepha* food."

"I ate neither pork nor shellfish," Elias submitted. "I ate a bit of sweet-bread. Of course it

hadn't been killed *kosher*. But is that such a great sin? Some of our most pious Jews go to Delmonico's. To-night, indeed, I saw Judge Nathan there, with his wife and daughters; and he's president of his congregation."

"Small sins beget larger ones. It's better not to commit even peccadillos," said the rabbi. "And eating *trefpha* food isn't merely a peccadillo. However, you're of full age. It's not my place to call you to account."

"Speaking of sins, Uncle Felix," Elias presently went on, "tell me, what is the worst sin that a Jew could commit?"

The rabbi's eyes had strayed back to his manuscript. Lifting them, "How?" he queried.

Elias repeated his question.

"Why," said the rabbi, "there are the ten commandments, which you know as well as I do. They're of equal force. Theft, adultery, murder—one is as bad as another."

"That isn't exactly what I meant. I meant the worst sin which a Jew, as a Jew, could commit—the worst infraction of the Torah as it applies peculiarly to Israel. The ten commandments embody the common law of morality, which is as binding upon Christians as it is upon Jews."

"Oh," said the rabbi, "that's another question."

"Would it be, for example, the desecration of Yom Kippur?"

"The desecration of Yom Kippur would be a

deadly sin ; so would the desecration of the Sabbath ; so would disobedience to parental authority. But the most deadly of all, in my opinion, would be a forbidden marriage."

"That is, marriage with a Christian?"

"Yes—with a Gentile, a Goy—with any one not of our own race."

"That, you think, is the one sin which would be most unpardonable in the sight of the Lord? For which He would inflict the severest punishment?"

"Yes, I think so. And it's rather odd that we should speak of this just now, for at the moment when you came in I was reading a sermon on the very subject—a sermon written by your own great-grandfather, the Reverend Abraham Bacharach, of New Orleans, the first of your family who came to America. I was reading a sermon that he preached at the excommunication of a young man of his congregation, who had married a Frenchwoman, a Catholic. Here it is."

The rabbi pointed to the manuscript that lay upon his table.

"Indeed?" questioned Elias. "What does he say?"

"Oh, he agrees with me, that it is absolutely the most deadly of sins. He denounces it with a good deal of energy. There's one paragraph here somewhere that struck me as especially fine. Would you like to hear it?"

"Yes, I shouldn't mind," Elias assented.

The rabbi picked up the manuscript and began to run over the pages, searching for the place.

"Ah, I've got it," he said at last. "It comes just after a statement of the circumstances, as a sort of summing up. It's in German. Shall I read the original or translate?"

"Translate, if you will."

The rabbi cleared his throat, brought the manuscript close to his eyes, knitted his brows and proceeded thus:

"Well, it runs this way: 'He has defied the law of the Lord our God. Let him tremble and be afraid. He has dishonored the memory of his ancestors; he has besmirched the name of his family; he has broken the tie that bound him to his kinsfolk; he has sent the father that begot him, and the mother that bore and suckled him, weeping on the way to their graves. Oh, let him cast down his face and be ashamed. To his brothers and sisters, to those who were his friends and loved him, to the rabbi, the chazzan, the parnass, and the people of this congregation, and to all faithful Jews from one end of the earth to the other, he is as one who has died a disgraceful death. The anger of the Most High shall single him out. His cup shall be filled to the brim with gall and wormwood. The light of the sun shall be extinguished for him. A curse shall rest upon him and upon all that concerns him. His wife shall become as a sore in his flesh. With a scolding tongue she shall bespew him. As a wanton, she shall shame him.

His worldly affairs shall not prosper. Misfortune and calamity shall follow wherever he goes. Whatsoever he puts his hand to, that shall fail. An old man, homeless and friendless, he shall beg his bread from door to door. His intelligence shall decay. He shall be pointed out and jeered at, as a fool that drivels and chatters. His health shall break. His bones shall rot in his body. His eyes shall become running ulcers in their sockets. His blood shall dry up, a fiery poison in his veins. And his seed also shall be afflicted. From generation to generation a blight shall pursue those that bear his name. For the blood of Israel mixed with the blood of a strange people, is like a sweet wine mixed with aloes. His sons shall be weak of mind and body. His daughters shall be ugly to look upon. To him and to his the Lord our God will show no mercy, even unto the brink of the grave. They shall be as if touched with the leprosy, shunned and despised of all men. (To the Goy they will continue to be Jews ; but to the Jew they will have become Goym. The Lord our God is a jealous God.) His love knoweth no bounds. His wrath is like a great fire that can not be put out. He showereth favors abundantly upon them that love Him and keep His commandments. The iniquity of the fathers He visits upon the children and the children's children, even unto the third and fourth generations. Blessed be the name of the Lord !' "

The rabbi had begun this reading in low and

matter-of-fact accents ; but as he proceeded, his voice had increased in volume and emphasis, and the last words rang forth, loud and resonant, as though they had been addressed to a multitude in the synagogue. The veins in his forehead stood out blue and swollen against the white skin, and behind the thick lenses of his spectacles you could see that his black eyes were flashing fire. He paused for a little, breathing deeply. By degrees the veins in his forehead grew small and smaller, becoming pale, flat lines, like veins in marble. Presently, laying aside the manuscript, "There, Elias," he added, quietly, "that is what your great-grandfather thought about intermarriage, and I guess there has never been a Bacharach to think differently. I hope there never may be one, I'm sure. Why—why, what makes you so pale ?"

"Am I pale ? I didn't know it. The denunciation is bitter—terrible. It gave me cold shivers."

"Yes, terrible, so it is. But not exaggerated. It sounds pretty strong, but it couldn't be called exaggerated. For really it's only a simple statement of the truth, the facts. I'm going to quote it in my own discourse next Sabbath. It's just like every thing else. Break a law, whether it be a law of nature, a law of the land, or the law of God, and you must expect to suffer the consequences, to be punished."

"Yes, of course. And yet, somehow, it seems as though the punishment ought to be in proportion to the offense. Do you seriously, literally, be-

lieve that the Lord would punish such a sin with such frightful, far-reaching penalties ? ”

“ With worse, even. No mere human mind can conceive, much less describe, the fearful forms the Divine vengeance would take. All we can do is to picture to ourselves the worst, and then say : It will be as bad as that, or worse. That’s what your grandfather has tried to do here. The Lord has expressed in perfectly plain language His desire that the integrity of Israel should be preserved. That was the purpose for which this world was created and mankind called into existence. Now, to enter into matrimony with a Gentile is such a flagrant setting at naught of the Lord’s will—why, common-sense is enough to show the inevitable consequences.”

“ But suppose a Jew should *love* a woman of another race—a Christian, for example ; what would you have him do ? Leave her ? Never see her again ? Give her up ? If he loved her, no pain that the Lord could inflict would be worse than the pain of that.”

“ Hold your tongue, Elias ! ” the rabbi cried sharply. “ What you say is blasphemous, is a denial of the Lord’s omnipotence. May the Lord forgive you. No, no. His power to inflict pain, as well as to confer blessings, is measureless. What would I have the Jew do ? Why, of course, I would have him give her up, no matter how much the sacrifice might cost him. But the case you put is not likely to arise. Love for a Christian woman never could enter a Jewish heart. Such a sentiment as a

Jew might perhaps feel for her would be an unholy passion. She might fascinate his senses, but of true love, she could inspire none at all."

"And yet, suppose, for the sake of argument, suppose that she could—that she had—that the Jew really did love her with true love, what then?"

"Why, then, as I say, I would have him renounce her, and abstain afterward from any sort of communication with her. I would have him pray, also, that his heart might be cleansed and restored to health; for such love would be a spiritual disease."

Elias made no answer. The rabbi turned his attention to his lamp, the flame of which was spluttering and palpitating, preparatory to going out.

"Pshaw," he said, extinguishing it, "I must have forgotten to fill it."

Then he struck a match, and lighted the gas.

"You have made me hungry and thirsty with so much talking," he continued. "Now I'm going down stairs to forage for something to eat. Will you come along?"

"No, I guess I'll go to bed," said Elias. "Good-night."

But he did not go to bed, nor even to his bedroom. He went to his studio, and sat down in the dark at the window.

It was a wondrous night—the sky cloudless, the air as clear as crystal. The moon, waning, was up, but out of sight in the south, hidden by the house-tops. Its frosty light bathed the prospect, like an

ethereal form of dew, as far as eye could see. The branches of the trees were silvered by it. Their shadows were sharply etched upon the turf beneath. The yellow flames of the street lamps flared faint and sickly. The few human beings who now and then passed on the sidewalk opposite, had the appearance of mere black spots in motion. Only the largest of the stars dared to show themselves, and they trembled, and were pale, as if cowed by their luminous rival. In the north-west, the spires of St. George's Church stood in massive profile against the deep, shimmering vault of sky. An impressive outlook, cold, serene, passionless ; of a sort to remind one of the magnitude and the inexorableness of the material universe, and of the infinitesimal smallness and insignificance of one's self, and to fill one's mind with solemn doubts and questions. But it had no such effect upon Elias Bacharach. Never had his own self loomed larger in his eyes, never had it more exclusively absorbed his faculties, than at this moment, in the face of this moonlit view.

Elias had been bred in the straitest sect of his religion ; a rare thing in this country in these days of radicalism and unbelief. From his earliest boyhood down, his training, his associations, his family life, nearly every influence that had borne upon him, had been of a nature to make him intensely, if not zealously or aggressively, a Jew—to imbue his mind thoroughly with the Jewish faith, and to color his character to its innermost fibers with

strong Jewish feelings. Besides, the blood of generations of devout Jews coursed in his veins ; it was tintured through and through with Jewish prejudice and superstition. He had never been sent to school, lest in some wise his Judaism might be weakened by contact with the Christians. His uncle, the rabbi, had taken sole charge of his education. Pride of race had been an integral part of the curriculum. " Never forget that you are a Jew, and remember that the world has no honor to bestow upon you equal to the honor that attaches to your birth. To be born in Israel is more illustrious than to be born a prince ; the blood of Israel outranks the blood royal ; for the Lord our God created the heavens and the earth, the birds and the beasts, the flowers, the trees, the air, the sunlight, for the especial enjoyment of His chosen and much-beloved people. But remember, too, that if the Lord has vouchsafed to you this great and peculiar privilege, so He will exact from you great and peculiar devotion. Though a Gentile—because the Lord pays no heed to him—may commit certain sinful acts with impunity, for you—upon whom the eye of the Lord rests perpetually—for you to commit them, would entail immediate and awful punishment. Though a Christian, for example—because he is of infinite smallness in the sight of the Lord—may transact business on the Sabbath, if you—a Jew—were to do so, the Lord would surely visit you with some frightful calamity. You might be struck by lightning ; you might be afflicted

with an incurable disease." This was the sort of doctrine that had been dinned into Elias Bacharach's ears from the time when he had first begun the studies preparatory to becoming Bar-Mitzvah, and to assuming, as the saying is, the Yoke of the Torah. Heredity predisposed him to accept it. The occasion had never arisen for him to doubt it, or even to consider it in the light of his own intelligence. He had taken it for granted, just as he had taken his geography and history for granted, just as many wiser people than he, the world over, take their theology for granted every day.

To a Jew such as this, nothing can be more intrinsically repugnant than the idea of marriage with a Christian—or, more accurately, with a Goy, which term is applied equally to all human beings who are not of Jewish faith and lineage. The average Caucasian would pretty certainly hesitate at the idea of marriage with a Mongolian. How much more positive would his hesitation be, if race antipathy were, as it is in the case of the Jews, reenforced by the terrors of a supernatural religion. It is no figure of speech, but a literal statement of the fact, to say that an orthodox Jewish father would rather have his son die than marry outside of Israel. He would prefer a funeral to such a wedding. Indeed, such a wedding would be regarded as equivalent to a funeral. The name of the bridegroom would be published among the names of the dead in the Jewish newspapers. His parents, his brothers and sisters, his nearest relatives, would put on mourning for

him; and henceforward, if they should pass him in the street, they would refuse to recognize him. In the synagogue he would be excommunicated and cursed. All pious Jews would be enjoined from holding any intercourse whatever with him; from speaking with him; from buying of him, or selling to him; from giving him food, drink, clothing or shelter; from succoring him in danger or in sickness; even from pronouncing his name. "Be he accursed, and be his name forever accursed among men." Furthermore, all pious Jews would cherish the conviction that sooner or later the vengeance of the Lord would overtake and overwhelm him. They would predict the direst calamities, the most fearful retribution. Superstition never pays attention to statistics, and is never shaken by them. No conceivable misfortune that can fasten upon a human being in this world, but they would promise it to him. Poverty, disease, disgrace; an adulterous wife; deformed children, unsound of mind and evil of heart; whatever the imagination can depict of horrible and disastrous would inevitably fall to his lot.

In this faith, among these traditions, Elias Bacharach had grown up. For hundreds, for thousands, of years, his ancestors on every side had nourished these superstitions.*

* It would seem hardly necessary, yet it is no more than fair to say that among the better-educated and more intelligent Jews in America, orthodoxy of this stripe is not common. Even among them, notwithstanding, it prevails to a sufficient extent; and among the ignorant classes it is the rule. It is a

And yet, an hour ago, when Elias had taken leave of Christine Redwood, his heart was palpitating with a myriad new and sweet emotions, for which, suddenly, at last, he realized that the right name was love—realized it, as has been said, with surprise and with consternation, for he had been unaccountably blind to his own condition until to-night. And during his walk home he had pictured to himself the exceeding joy that would be his if she should ever come to love him in return. And even now, the light of her eyes still shone in his memory, the scent of her garments still clung in his nostrils, the sound of her voice still vibrated in his ears, the touch of her hand was still warm upon his arm. Even now, as he looked out into the vast moonlit sky, and spoke her name softly to himself, a thrill swept electrically through his body. He loved her, he told himself; and if he could not win her love, if he could not have her for his wife, the world would become a desert to him, his life would be wasted, he would rather die, here, now, at once. Perhaps Christine, too, was at this hour looking out of her window. Perhaps her eyes, as well as his, were filling themselves with the glory of the night. In this fancy, highly improbable as it was, he found much comfort. It was good to think that he and

curious circumstance, however, that, in the majority of cases, those very Jews who have cast quite loose from their Judaism, and proclaim themselves "free-thinkers," "agnostics," or what not, retain their prejudice against intermarriage, and even their superstitions anent its consequences.

she were enjoying something in common. The moonlight was like a palpable link connecting them, like a gossamer cord stretching between them and binding them together. Would that it might bear a message from him to her, and let her know of the love that was yearning in his bosom. Again he spoke aloud her name, caressing it as it passed his lips. And again his heart thrilled, intoxicated with love and hope.

But all at once his superstition sprang upon him. All at once, like a flash of lightning in the darkness, the fear of the Divine wrath lit up his imagination. Every drop of blood in his body came to a standstill and grew cold. He could feel his flesh creep, his hair rise on end. For a third time he pronounced her name ; but this time it escaped like a gasp of pain from between clenched teeth. Why had he ever seen her ? Why had he not understood the peril that he was running, and avoided it ? Henceforth, at any rate, he would never see her again. He would do as his uncle had said, give her up, tear her from his heart. No matter how hard it might be, he would do it, and so save her and himself from perdition. But the resolution had not taken shape in his mind before Christine's face, pale and pleading, with pathetic, passionate eyes, came up visibly before him ; and then he was conscious of nothing but of a great tenderness for her, an infinite need of her, a sharp pang of remorse that he should have been disloyal to her for an instant, a strong throbbing in his temples, a wondrous

tremor through all his senses. Yet, even while this vision was still haunting his sight, the voice of the rabbi began to ring hideously in his ears, repeating the anathema that his own ancestor had written ; and all the Jew in him shuddered at the sound.

He covered his head and prayed.

He remained in prayer until the dawn had begun to whiten the walls of his room.

Then he sat down at his window, and watched the red and gold burn in the eastern sky, and wondered at the strange calm that had come to him. His prayer had been answered, he believed. He had prayed that his heart might be purged of the unholy love that had stolen into it. Now he could think of Christine with complete indifference. Not a trace was left of the agitation which that thought had aroused in him a little while ago.

"The Lord has heard my prayer. I am not in love with her any more," he said.

He went through the rest of that week in the same indifferent condition—ate, drank, slept, painted, chatted with his uncle, kept the Sabbath, precisely as though Christine Redwood had never crossed the horizon of his world.

"I am not in love with her," he assured himself. "She is a pretty and pleasant girl ; but I am not in love with her, and never shall be."

The Jew had got the better of the man.

VII.

WHEN Elias woke up Sunday morning, he saw that it was snowing. He lay abed for a while, with eyes turned upon his window-pane, and watched the snow-flakes float lightly and silently earthward through the still air. The street below was noisy with the sound of shovels scraping the pavement. The daylight had caught a deathlike pallor from the whiteness round about. Elias wondered whether he would be expected in Sixty-third Street, despite the storm. He got up and dressed, all the while balancing this question in his mind. But presently the weather itself decided for him. The storm ceased. The snow fell no more. The sun came out.

He went up-town, entered Redwood's parlor, and sat down facing the folding-doors that led into the back room.

He was not in love with her. She was a pretty and pleasant girl, and all that; but he was not in love with her, and never would be. This is what he had repeated to himself again and again during the past few days. So be it. But then why—when all at once she appeared in the opening of the folding-doors, and advanced toward him, proffering her hand, and wishing him good-morning—why did his heart stop beating? Why did his breath become labored and tremulous? Why did his lips quiver, his cheeks burn? Why should the sight of

her have had this effect upon a man who did not love her, who was not even on the point of loving her? And then, when he took the proffered hand in his, and gazed down at her face, and breathed the air that her presence sweetened, why was his breast suddenly pierced by a strange emotion, half a pain, half an ecstatic pleasure, and why did he have to exert his utmost self-control, to keep from catching her in his arms, and kissing her? What is the psychology of these phenomena, if he did not love her? She wore the same blue gown that she had worn at all their sittings; but it seemed to him that her face was paler, and that her eyes were larger and darker, than their wont.

She bade him good-morning and withdrew her hand, and remained standing before him; and he remained standing before her, vainly striving to think of something appropriate to say. But—such perturbation did her mere nearness cause him—his senses were dispersed, his tongue was tied. At last, however, he contrived to articulate five words. The sentiment was neither very novel nor very witty; but it was at least creditable, and, let us trust, sincere.

“I hope you are well?”

“No,” she answered, “I don’t feel very well.”

“Indeed? I—I hope it is nothing serious.”

“Oh, no; only a headache. And I feel lazy and chilly. I’m afraid I have caught a cold.”

“Then I shan’t think of letting you sit for me

this morning. We'll wait about our next sitting till you are better."

"It's too bad to delay you so."

"No, no, not at all. It won't make the slightest difference. And now, I know you ought to go and lie down. So I'll take myself off. Good-by."

The last words were forced out with a manifest effort; and the speaker made no visible move to accompany them by the act.

"Oh, must you go?" she asked; and Elias thought her voice fell.

"Why," he confessed, "I should like nothing better than to stay; only, I was afraid I might be in the way."

"Oh, what an idea! Won't you come into the back room? It's warmer and cozier there."

In the back room a bright fire crackled in the grate. Old Redwood sat before it, feet on fender, reading his newspaper. He greeted Elias, without rising; "Oh, it's you, is it, Mr. Bacharach? Glad to see you," and went on reading.

Christine sank into a deep easy-chair at her father's left. Elias seated himself next to her. He did not speak. He had no desire to speak. He would gladly have sat there all day in silence, simply enjoying the sight of her, and his sense of closeness to her.

She said, "It is a pity to have brought you clear up here for nothing, Mr. Bacharach. It makes me feel guilty to think of the time you are losing."

"My time," he protested, "is not of such great value ; and there's no place where I could spend it so pleasantly."

"I should have written you a note," she added, "telling you not to come ; but I had no idea I was going to feel out-of-sorts. I felt as well as usual last night."

"I'm very glad you didn't write the note," he said, with haste and emphasis.

"Any way," she reflected, "you couldn't have received it, could you ? To-day being Sunday, it wouldn't have been delivered till to-morrow."

He made no answer. At that moment he was gazing at a tiny white hand that rested on the arm of her chair, gazing hungrily at it, and thinking how he would like for a single second to touch it, to stroke it, to press it to his lips. The hand must have felt the influence of his gaze, for it began to move about in a restless, uneasy manner, and ended by hiding itself among the folds of her garment in her lap. Elias sighed, as it disappeared ; and then, with no obvious relevancy, remarked, "This is the first snow of the year."

"Yes," she assented ; "and now Christmas will be here pretty soon, and then my birthday. Do you know, Mr. Bacharach, it's very unfortunate to have your birthday come right after Christmas ? Because, of course, you can't expect to get presents so soon again. I want my father to change my birthday to July—make believe I was born on the third of July, instead of the third of January.

That would have a double advantage. It would make me six months younger."

"But if I should do that," argued the old man, "I should have to apply to the legislature to have your name changed, too. We named you Christine, on account of your being born so near Christmas. If we shift your birthday over to July, we'll have to call ye Julia."

"Oh, then I'd rather have you leave things as they are. I should hate to be called Julia. Do you like Julia, Mr. Bacharach?"

"Not nearly so well as Christine."—It was delightful—so intimate, so confidential—thus to be allowed to speak her name in her presence.—"Christine," lingering upon the word, "Christine is the prettiest name I know."

"Your name"—shyly—"your name is Elias, isn't it?" she asked.

"Yes, Elias. There have never been any names but three among the men of my family—Ephraim, Abraham, and Elias. My father's name was Abraham, his father's Elias, and so on back. The younger son, when there has been one, has always been called Ephraim. Old-fashioned, Bible names, you see."

"I had a second-cousin named Ephraim," old Redwood volunteered.

Christine said, "I'm glad they didn't name you Ephraim or Abraham. But I like Elias."

"Do you, indeed? Most people find it exceedingly ugly. When I was a boy, it used to make

me quite unhappy. My playmates used to tease me about it."

"How heartless of them! And how stupid! For it isn't a bit ugly. It's strong. It has so much character, so much individuality—Elias."

If it had been agreeable to be allowed to pronounce her name, it was trebly agreeable to hear her pronounce and applaud his own. Indeed, the quality of the name hereby underwent a considerable transformation, and acquired a euphony to his ears that it had never possessed before.

"Speaking of names," continued Christine, "do you remember those names that Rossetti mentions in 'The Blessed Damozel,' and calls sweet symphonies?"

"I think Rosalys was one, and Gertrude another, weren't they? There were five altogether."

"Magdalen was a third. But the book is right there on the table. Let's look and see."

Elias got the book, sought the place, and read aloud:

"—Whose names
Are five sweet symphonies,
Cecily, Gertrude, Magdalen,
Margaret and Rosalys."

Christine said, "I wonder, Mr. Bacharach, whether you will do me a kindness?"

"You need not wonder. Of course I will, and gladly. What is it?"

"Read the whole poem aloud to me."

Elias read it to her. He read it with a good

deal of fervor. To be permitted to read aloud to her a poem fraught with intense passion like "The Blessed Damozel," was the next best thing to being permitted to talk to her of his own love. And all the while, as he was reading, he was conscious of a dainty, subtle fragrance being wafted toward him from where his auditor was seated, and penetrating to his heart, and making it thrill. And whenever he lifted his eyes from off the page, they encountered hers, in the depths of which he could see burning a pale, strange fire; and again his heart vibrated with a keen, exquisite thrill.

When he had done, she exclaimed, softly but earnestly, "Oh, how beautifully you read it! You made me *thrill* so here," placing her hand upon her breast.

At that he experienced the keenest and the most exquisite thrill of all.

Pretty soon. "Tell me," she went on, "which one of Rossetti's poems do you like best of all?"

"Oh!" said he, "I should have hard work to choose. Yet, perhaps, I like 'The Bride's Prelude' as well as any. But which do you?"

"You'll laugh, if I tell you."

"Oh, no, I sha'n't. Tell me, please."

"Well, the one that somehow moves me most deeply—it is one that I have scarcely ever heard praised or quoted—may be you haven't even read it. It's a little mite of a lyric—this."

She took the book, and quietly, slowly, intently, musically, read aloud the song, "Even So."

"Those last lines," she added, "sound like the wail of a soul—they are so hopeless, so passionate, so despairing. They *suggest* so much more than they *say*—such a deep, dumb grief. Sometimes they haunt my mind for hours and hours together, and give me such a strange heartache. What could it have been, the thing that separated them? I suppose he must have done something base—something that killed her love, so that he lost her forever. Yet I can't understand why it should be so absolutely hopeless. If they really were all alone together, as he says, and she saw how dreadfully he had suffered, I don't understand how she could help forgiving him and loving him again. Do you?"

And she repeated the verse :

"Could we be so now?—

Not if all beneath heaven's pall

Lay dead but I and thou,

Could we be so now!"

She repeated the verse, and at the end she drew a long, tremulous breath. If she had noticed Elias Bacharach's physiognomy, while she was speaking, she could not have failed to guess his secret. Pale cheeks, parted lips, and eyes riveted upon her face, told the whole story more eloquently than his tongue could have done. But her attention was all for Rossetti's poetry.

"Well," exclaimed old Redwood, "that may be very fine sentiment. I'm not denying it is. But the grammar is what stumps me. When 'but'

is used as a preposition, in the sense of 'except,' it governs the accusative case. At least, that's how I was taught at school. The line ought to read: 'Lay dead but me and thee,' or 'me and you.' Ain't that so, Mr. Bacharach?"

"Well, I suppose it's poet's license," said Elias.

Folding his newspaper, and getting upon his feet, the old man continued, "Well, I guess I may as well go out and get shaved, Chris. I'll leave you in the charge of Mr. Bacharach. Take care of her, Mr. B." And he went away.

Elias was alone with her.

She sat far back in her chair, looking through half-closed lids into the fire. He sat forward, upon the ultimate edge of his chair, and looked at her. His breath was coming hard and fierce. The blood was bounding in his veins.

For a while neither of them spoke.

By and by Elias broke the silence.

"Miss — Miss Redwood," he began; then stopped.

"Yes?" she queried.

He began again, "Miss Redwood—" Again he stopped. His throat felt compressed, his mouth hot and parched. He knew perfectly well what he wanted to say; but his heart trembled so, he could not say it.

She, puzzled no doubt by these successive repetitions of her name, lifted her eyes inquiringly to his.

For an instant their eyes staid together.

That was a memorable instant for Elias Bacharach. A great wave of emotion took away his breath, made his body quiver, his head swim, as if with vertigo. He tried to speak. His tongue lay paralyzed in his mouth.

Suddenly she looked down ; and a scarlet blush suffused her throat and cheeks.

He leapt forward, fell upon his knees before her, caught her hand, and whispered—a tense, eager whisper, that clove the air like a flame—“ *Christine—my darling !* ”

She drew her hand away. She trembled from head to foot.

“ Don’t be afraid, my darling. Don’t tremble,” he whispered.

But she did not cease to tremble. She neither raised her eyes, nor spoke. Her blush had died away, leaving her face very pale. Even her lips had lost their color.

“ Christine,” he whispered, “ I could not help it. I love you. I could not keep it secret, Christine.”

Shrinking from him, deeper into her chair, “ Don’t—please don’t,” she pleaded, in a weak, frightened voice.

Still in a whisper : “ I could not help it. I—I had to tell you. Oh, why do you shrink away from me, like that, and tremble ? Is my love hateful to you ? ”

“ Oh, no, no, not that,” impulsively ; but then she blushed again, as if ashamed.

“ Oh, my God ! God bless you ! ” he cried, with

a great sigh of relief. "I was afraid it might be."

He leaned toward her, breathing swiftly; and his eyes consumed her face. By and by, very gently, he spoke her name, "Christine!"

Her lips parted—"Yes?"

"Christine—I love you—with all my heart and soul."

No response.

"Christine—do you believe me?"

A long breath; then a scarce audible "Yes."

"Do you think"—he paused to gain courage. "Do you think it will ever be possible for you to care for me?"

No answer.

"Christine—won't you answer me?"

She raised her eyes; and for an infinitesimal fraction of a second they rested upon his. But then they hastened to seek refuge behind dropped lids, as if afraid of what they had seen and of what they had revealed. Again her cheeks blushed scarlet.

Elias started. Suddenly, he threw his arms around her, and drew her to him hard and close. Her face lay against his shoulder. There was no sound in the room, save the sound of their breathing. At last she broke away.

"Christine—do you think—perhaps—you do—care for me—a little?"

"I don't know," in a timid whisper.

"Not—not the least bit in the world?"

"I d-don't know," in a smaller and more timid

whisper still. "I—I never thought of it till—till you spoke."

"Oh, but now that I *have* spoken—now that you *have* thought of it—say—say that you don't hate me."

"Oh, no ; I don't hate you at all."

He took her hand and kissed it. It was burning hot. She drew it gently away.

"Don't—please," she said, very low.

Again no sound.

Again at length, "Christine !"

"Yes ?"

"Do you mind my calling you by your first name—Christine ?"

"No—not if you like to."

"Do you think—you—could ever call me—by mine ?"

"I don't know."

"Won't you try ? It—it would make me very happy."

"El-El-ias—" so softly that it sounded more like a little sigh than like a word.

"Oh ! You make me so happy ! But do you want to make me happier still ?"

"What shall I do ?"

"Tell me you are not sorry I love you."

"Oh, no ; I am not sorry."

"Tell me—tell me that you are glad."

"Yes—I—I think—I am—glad."

"Oh, my love ! Can't you say just one thing more ? You know what. Please."

She breathed quickly. "Perhaps," she whispered.

Again Elias threw his arms around her, and drew her close to him. This time she offered no resistance. Their eyes met. So did their lips.

"Oh, how hard your heart is beating!" she murmured softly.

Presently they heard a footstep in the hall.

"It is my father," she said, moving away.

"Shall we tell him?" Elias asked.

"No, not yet. I will tell him after you have gone."

The old man entered, clean-shaven, and redolent of the barber's balmy touch. It was edifying, the matter-of-fact, unsentimental manner in which these young hypocrites thereupon began to talk and act. Yes, it *was* strange, how rapidly the snow had melted; and it *did* look as though they might have a green Christmas after all; and they neither of them believed in that lugubrious old proverb about a fat church-yard, any how; and, of course, Mr. Bacharach would stay to dinner, wouldn't he? and, well, he would like to, very much indeed, but he didn't want to wear out his welcome; and, oh, there wasn't the slightest danger of his doing that, was there, father? etc., etc. But whenever the old gentleman's back was turned, they stole an eloquent glance at each other; and now and then Elias found an opportunity slyly to snatch and press her hand.

When he left, Christine went with him to the door. Never before had the simple process of leave-taking required such a length of time.

He wandered about the street for a long while,

ere he went home. There, he mounted to his studio, and, as usual, sat down at the window. Could it be the same studio that he had worked in, the other day? Could he be the same man? He was as nearly delirious as a person in sound health can be, without going sheer out of his senses. His brain whirled round and round. It was impossible for him to carry on a consecutive or coherent process of thought. Dazzling glimpses of the happiness that the future held in store for him, alternated with exquisite throes of joy, as he recalled what had happened that very day. His heart kept thrilling, and swinging from hot to cold, like a thing bewitched. A sweet smell clung to the palm of his hand, at the spot where hers had lain.

In bed he tossed about all night, murmuring Christine's name, and remembering the way she had looked, and the words that she had spoken, and the kiss that she had given him, and all the rest. At last, without apparent why or wherefore, there began to haunt his mind that verse of Rossetti's poetry, which, she said, had haunted hers. He could not silence it. It repeated itself in a hundred keys. Toward dawn he fell into a restless sleep, to the rhythm of it :

“ Could we be so now ?—

Not if all beneath heaven's pall

Lay dead but I and thou,

Could we be so now ! ”

But waking up, late next forenoon, he came to his senses—realized what he had done, and reflected

upon it. He hardly dared to credit his memory. He hardly dared to believe that what he remembered was the very truth, and not an hallucination born of his desire. And yet—No ; dreams were not made of such circumstantial stuff.

“I love her, I love her,” he cried exultantly.
“*And she loves me !*”

What had become of his Judaism ? his race-pride ? his superstition ? Love, apparently, had swept them clean away. Not a vestige of them remained. At a touch, it seemed, love had converted Elias Bacharach from the most reactionary sort of orthodoxy, to a rationalism, the bare contemplation of which, a few days ago, would have appalled him.

“Surely,” he argued, “the Law of God as the hands of men have written it in books, is not to be weighed against the Law of God as the hand of Nature has written it in my own heart.”

He could not realize that he had ever thought otherwise. He could not realize that he had ever shrunk in terror from the idea of marrying Christine Redwood. He could not realize that he had ever professed a creed by which such a marriage would have been accounted sin. When he recollected how, less than a week ago, that same creed had kept him awake, praying, all night long—when he recollected how, for six days, he had told himself that he did not love her, and never would—he was nonplused ; he could not admit it ; it was like the recollection of a bad, fantastic dream.

The man had got the better of the Jew.

VIII.

THE man had got the better of the Jew ; and the man retained the upper hand. There came no reaction. Elias Bacharach's Judaism—or so much of it, at least, as bore upon the question of matrimony—had apparently suffered sudden and total annihilation. Under the light of love, it had apparently behaved as those hackneyed images in the Etruscan tombs behaved under the light of the sun—collapsed into nothingness. Looking backward, and repeating to himself the views upon intermarriage, which, the rabbi said, there had never been a Bacharach to doubt, he was amazed at their glaring unreasonableness, at their enormity even, and could only ask incredulously, “Is it possible that I ever believed that rubbish?” The philosophy of the matter was extremely simple. Elias had never bestowed upon the rabbi's religious teachings any skeptical consideration. He had accepted them as facts stated upon authority—had taken the rabbi's word for them, just as he had taken the rabbi's word for the boundaries of the State of Nebraska, and for the date of the Battle of Bunker Hill. But, now, when, for the first time, circumstances had led him to bring to bear upon them a little analysis and common-sense, to exercise a little his right and his power of private judgment, now their absurdity had become startlingly conspicuous. Then, of course, his wish fostered his

thought. Every spontaneous impulse of his nature aided and abetted his intelligence in its iconoclasm. He wanted—*he wanted*—to marry Christine Redwood ; and a theology which taught that, merely because the accident of birth had made of him a Jew, and of her a Christian, such marriage would be sinful, thereby proved itself to be the offspring of prejudice and superstition.

Christine had said that she would tell her father ; but on second thoughts she found that she lacked the proper courage ; and so Elias, not without some trepidation, had to take the mission upon himself. The old man, at the outset, professed no end of astonishment, and considerable indignation. "So !" he cried. "I engage you to paint my daughter's portrait, and you spend the time making love to her ! A pretty kettle of fish, as I'm alive !" But by degrees his amiability was restored ; and finally he remarked, "Well, Mr. Bacharach, though you *are* a Hebrew, you're white ; and any how, religion don't worry us much in this household, and never did. I'm a Universalist, myself ; and Chris—well, I guess no one knows what she is. One thing's certain—she might have gone further, and fared worse ; she might, for a fact. You're a perfect gentleman ; and you can't help it, if you *were* born a Jew. You don't look like one, and you don't act like one. Of course, there's your name—Bacharach—a regular jaw-breaker ; but I shan't stick on a name. It ain't I that's got to bear it ; and so long as Chris is satisfied, it ain't for me to

grumble. I guess she'll smell about as sweet under it, as she does under her present one. You see, I agree with the Great Bard. Any how, if she's made up her mind to have ye, I suppose I'll be obliged to say yes, sooner or later; and it'll save time and trouble for me to say it sooner." So it was arranged that they should be married early in the spring, that they should spend the summer traveling in Europe, and that in the autumn they should return to New York, and domicile themselves under Redwood's roof.

"The man who marries my daughter," stipulated the old gentleman, with a grim smile, "has got to marry me. I ain't pretty, but I'm solid; and I'm not going to be separated from her in my old age. He's got to fetch his traps, and live in this house, besides, because I'm used to it, and I don't mean to quit it till I'm carried out horizontally. It's big enough, and to spare, the Lord knows. Come and look it over."

Elias followed the old man from cellar to garret. On the third floor his conductor threw open a door, and announced. "This is her room." Elias's memory of the few brief seconds that he had been permitted to pass upon Christine's threshold, looking into her room, breathing the sweet air of it, and noting its hundred pretty little girlish fixings—inanimate companions of her most intimate life—thrilled in his heart many a time afterward. Was it not for him, her lover, like a glimpse into the Holy of Holies?

They were to be married in the spring. Now it was December. Meanwhile they had nothing to do but to make the most of the present. They saw each other nearly every day ; and those days on which something prevented them from seeing each other, were very long and very dark days to Elias Bacharach. How did they amuse themselves ? Innocently enough, and with no sort of difficulty. If an exhaustive account of their doings were reduced to writing, it would seem very trivial and very monotonous ; but to them, basking in the light of new-born love, the trivial and the monotonous did not exist. High and low, far and wide, the world had been invested with the splendor, the mystery, and the majesty of the golden age. Yes, indeed : the period, long or short, during which first love holds sway over our hearts, tyrant though the ruler be, is notoriously our golden age, never to come but once. In this respect history does not repeat itself. Elias felt that each of his five senses had been sharpened, and that, moreover, he had acquired a sixth sense, a super-sense. The homeliest things, the most familiar sights, the commonest occurrences, took on a beauty, a significance, a suggestiveness, undreamed of until now. They aroused thoughts in his brain, emotions in his breast. He had used to regard New York as a somewhat sordid and unpicturesque metropolis : now he held it to be the most romantic city of the earth. Did she not dwell within its walls ? Certainly, in former years, the Eighth

Avenue horse-railway, with its dingy cars and shabby passengers, had had no special fascination for him; but now the bare mention of its name would rouse a sentimental tenderness in his bosom. Was not that the line by which he traveled when he went to see her? Everywhere he became aware of new aspects and new influences, to which heretofore his consciousness had been hermetically sealed. In a letter written by him to Christine at about this time—for, despite the frequency of their meetings, they found it necessary to keep the post-office busied on their behalf—Elias indulges in the following rhapsody:

“I have waked up from a long sleep, a period of torpor, diversified by vague dreams, into fresh, keen, sensitive life. I have begun to love; and until one begins to love, one is only half born. Until one loves, half the faculties, half the activities, which one possesses, lie in a dormant state, are merely potential, latent. For love—is it not the very soul and life of life itself? I know a poem which says: ‘Through love to light! Oh, wonderful the way, that leads from darkness to the perfect day!’ That expresses exactly what I mean. The life I lived before I knew you, and began to love you, compared to the life I live now, as the dusk of early morning compares to the brilliant day that comes with the rising of the sun. Where there was chill, now there is warmth. Where there was silence, now there is music. Where there was gloom, now there is glory.

Things that were before invisible or insignificant, now force themselves upon my attention, and have a meaning and a solemnity. It is as though you had touched me with a vivifying wand—as though you had given me to drink of the elixir of life. Well, you *have* given me to drink of the elixir of love ; and that is even more potent and marvelous in its effects. These are not mere phrases, Christine, dashed off in enthusiasm, without being weighed. They are an imperfect expression of very real and practical facts. See the direct and manifest influence that my love of you has exercised upon my work, my art. I used to tell myself, with a good deal of complacency, that the artist was a sort of priest ; that he ought to be a celibate, that he ought to consecrate the whole of himself to his art, that the muse should be his wife, that no mortal woman should divide his homage with her. I had one formula that pleased me especially. I said, ‘The muse is a jealous mistress. She will brook no rivalry. To win her favor, one must renounce the world, and devote himself exclusively to her service.’ And I used to fancy that I really believed this high-flown nonsense. But what sophism ! What cant ! What puerile pinning of my faith to a hollow set of words ? For the very first requirement to successful accomplishment in art—what is it ? Isn’t there a spiritual equipment as much needed by the artist, as indispensable to his productiveness, as his material equipment of palette, paint-tubes, and brushes ? Why, the very sine-

qua-non is this ; that he shall *live*. I mean, that he shall be intensely human ; that he shall think clearly, feel deeply, and see truly—see the truth, the whole truth, and the very heart of the truth. Until one has lived in this sense, one's art will never be real art. It will only be a nicer, a more complex, species of mechanics. It will be the body of art, without the spirit of it. Well, did I live, did I think, feel, see, before I knew you, and loved you ? A little, perhaps ; vaguely, incompletely ; by fits and starts ; as in a glass, darkly. But now ? Oh, it is as though you had given me a soul ! You have quickened the dormant soul that was in me, given it eyes, ears, perceptions, sympathies. At last I am alive, tingling and throbbing to my finger tips with life, with warm, buoyant, intense, eager life. My existence now is a constant exaltation, a constant inspiration. Whatever my eye looks upon, whatever my ear hears, whatever my fingers touch, means something, says something to me, and wakes a response in my own heart. I think, feel, see, and consequently paint, with a zest, an impetus, a power, and yet a serenity, a repose, of which I never even had a conception in the old days, Christine ! Oh, my love ! . . . When I look at you, Christine, and realize that you are my betrothed—that you love me, and that you have promised to be my wife ; and when I take your little hand in mine, and stroke it, and feel its wondrous warmth and softness, and bring it to my lips, and breathe that most delicate fragrance which ever clings to it ;

and when I gaze into the luminous depths of your eyes, and behold your spirit burning far, far down in them : oh ! my blood seems to catch fire ; each breath is like a draught of some magic, intoxicating vapor ; I come near to fainting, for the great joy that fills my heart—fills it, and thrills it. I dare say all men who love, and are loved in return, are happy. But none can be so supremely happy as I am, so miraculously happy ; because no one else loves you, and is loved by you. And other women are no more like you than—than dust is like fire, than glass is like diamond, than water is like wine. You mustn't laugh at me for saying this. It is really, honestly true. They resemble you in outward form, of course ; they, too, have hands and feet, shaped more or less upon the same pattern that yours are shaped upon. But you—you have something—something which I can not name or describe—something subtle, impalpable, and yet unmistakable—something supersensual, celestial—which makes you as different from them as—it is a grotesque comparison, but it will show you what I mean—as a magnet is different from common iron. It is a difference of quality, which I can not find any words exactly to define. I suppose really that it is simply your soul—that you have a purer, finer soul than other women. Whatever it is, I recognized it, and felt it, with a thick thrill, as one feels an electric spark, the first time I ever saw you—reflected in that old, time-stained looking-glass, between the

windows in your father's shop. I recognize and feel it perpetually, everywhere I go. All the other women that I see have about them a touch of the earth, from which you are free ; and they lack that touch of heaven, which you have. . . . Why, from among the millions of men upon this planet, why should I have been the one chosen to enjoy this unique rapture? What have I done to deserve that the single peerless and perfect lady should be mine? It is incomprehensible. In a world built up of marvels, it is the prime, the crowning, the over-topping marvel. It would be incredible, were it not indubitably true. But sometimes, true though I know it to be, I become so acutely conscious of the wonder and incomprehensibility of it, that I doubt it in spite of myself. Then I think : may be, after all, it is a dream. At such moments, I hasten to see you, to verify it. I can not reach you quickly enough. At what a snail's pace the horse-car drags along ! How endless are the intervals when it stops, to take in or to let off a passenger ! I count the seconds, I count the inches. All the while, my soul is trembling within me ; nor does it cease to tremble, till I have crossed your threshold, and beheld you with my eyes, and touched you with my hands, and thus, so far as seeing and feeling are believing, convinced myself that you really exist, and that my great happiness is not a phantasm—unless indeed, my whole life is one long phantasm, one continuous dream, which sometimes I think may be the explanation of it. This great, vast happiness ! It

would be ungrateful and irreverent to suppose that it has fallen to my lot by mere chance or accident ; and yet I can not understand why God should have so favored me above all other living men ; why He should have selected me to receive the greatest blessing that He had to bestow—your love, my queen ! ”

And in a letter written by her to him, she says : “ What if we had never known each other ? That would have been very possible, wouldn't it ? The world is so large, and there are so many, many people, and the likelihood of any two happening to come together is so very slight, it would have been quite possible for us to have gone through life, and died, without ever having known each other. Think of the many years that we did dwell right here in the same city, without ever even knowing of each other's existence ! And yet often, perhaps, in the course of those years, we came very near together. Who can tell but that we may have sat together in the same concert-hall, listening to the same music ? We may have passed each other in the street a great many times. We may even have ridden in the same horse-car together, and not have noticed each other. Isn't it strange ? But think, if I had not happened to go to my father's shop that afternoon ! Or, if you had not happened to go there, too, at just the same time ! Why, then we might never have known each other at all ! It takes my breath away, to think of it ; doesn't it yours ? How strange and empty and incomplete

our lives would have been ? We should have gone through life, without ever really knowing what life meant—without ever realizing the greatness and the richness and the wonder of it. I should never have known what it was to love—for I never could have loved any one but you. Oh, how lonesome I should have been ! But you—do you think you might have loved somebody else, and married her ? There are so many women ; but there is only one you.— Oh, if I could only feel sure that you would always, always love me, and never get over loving me ! Whenever you are away from me, I can't help being afraid that you do not love me any more. I long so impatiently to have you come back and tell me that you do. If you ever really should get over loving me—oh, I—I would rather have you kill me right away."

Thus these young persons pursued their billing and cooing. Thus they played their parts in the oldest of old plays, never for an instant suspecting that the same songs had been sung, the same lines declaimed, the same little scenes enacted, the whole worn threadbare, by myriads of similar personages, ever since the world began ; and scarcely giving a thought, either, to the time when, by and by, the curtain would be rung down, and the theater emptied, and the foot-lights put out. So short-sighted, so self-absorbed, is love. The two letters from which I have just quoted, lie before me now. It is not such a great while since they were written—not such a great while since the paper grew hot

under the writer's hand, and fluttered as the reader's breath fell upon it. But the paper is quite cold now ; and already the ink has begun to fade. Yet, to Christine's pages there still clings, singularly enough, the ghost of a faint, sweet smell.

Numberless were the delightful hours that Elias spent painting at her portrait ; and long before the spring came he had it finished. Of course, he was not satisfied with it. Of course, he found it tame and poor when compared to the original. But what true artist ever is satisfied with his own handiwork ? What true lover but always will find tame and poor a portrait of his mistress ? He made, besides, a great many pencil and water-color drawings of her. He never tired of striving to transfix something of her exquisite beauty upon the pages of his sketch-book. The effort was always a pleasure. The result was always a disappointment. He did not, however, by any means, confine these experiments to his sketch-book. All the blank paper that passed his way, ran an imminent risk of being seized upon, and made to bear an attempt at her likeness. I have on my desk that volume of Rossetti's poems, from which, on a memorable Sunday morning, Elias read aloud "The Blessed Damozel." Scattered over the fly-leaves and the margins of the pages, I have counted no fewer than sixty-nine pencil studies of Christine's face, in various stages of completion. Beneath one of these is written in Elias's hand, "Oh, what a wonder of

a woman ! ” and immediately following, in Christine’s, “ Oh, what a goose ! ”

Often, if the sun shone, they would take long walks in Central Park ; and Christine kept her promise to show him some of those nooks and corners which she had preempted, and which nobody else knew the existence of. One of these speedily became a favorite resort of theirs. It was a high rock, the top of which was carpeted with many generations of pine needles, and screened from the vulgar gaze by a girdle of pine trees. Here, when the weather was warm enough, they would stop to rest for a little after their jaunts ; and here, though he never suspected it, the final chapter of Elias Bacharach’s story was destined to be acted out. The pine trees are still standing and flourishing : but they are inscrutable, and bear no record, breathe no hint, of the tender passages between these lovers, at which they were wont to assist.

Often, in the midst of his work in his studio, Elias would be seized by a sudden and uncontrollable desire to pay his sweetheart a visit ; and would fling aside his brushes, discharge his model, hurry up-town, and ring her door-bell. Of course, unapprised of his coming, she would not always be at home ; but if the maid could inform him whither she had gone, he would be sure to follow ; and on more than one occasion he caught a fine cold, standing in the wind-swept street, watching the door of the house where he knew that she was calling, and waiting to join her at her exit.

Christmas came, and New Year's Day, and her birthday, and his. They celebrated all of these festivals in company. For New Year's Eve, one of Christine's Normal College classmates had invited her to a party. Elias naturally was her cavalier. He suffered torments indescribable, as she whirled through the waltz on the arm of another man—he could not dance, himself ; had never learned how, poor fellow—but when, from the corner in which he was sulking alone, he saw that the heel of her slipper had broken off, and that her partner was holding that heel in his hand, and inspecting it with curious eyes, he could no longer contain himself. Another man to profane with his touch the heel of Christine's slipper ! He advanced upon the couple, scowling savagely ; and addressing the young man : “ Give me that,” he commanded gruffly. He got hold of it, and stuck it into his pocket. Christine shot dagger-glances at him. On their way home, in the carriage, she scolded him roundly for his jealousy and his bad manners ; but before they separated, she had forgiven him ; and the padded carriage walls had witnessed a very pretty reconciliation. That night he sat up till daybreak, writing her a letter, very penitent, very affectionate, very voluminous. “ That we should have begun the New Year with a quarrel ! ” was its remorseful burden. At eight o'clock he dispatched it by a messenger. Yet he knew that at ten o'clock that very forenoon she would be ready to receive him in proper person. But ten o'clock !

Two mortal hours ! It seemed years and years away.

Time moved steadily forward. The winter passed. March came, an exceptionally mild, sunshiny March, much of which was spent among the pine trees in the park ; then April. Their wedding-day was definitely fixed for the second of May. On the third, they were to set sail by the French steamship for Havre. Their tickets were bought, their plans were all made. The services of the clergyman who was to tie the knot, had been secured. And yet, in all these months, not a whisper of his engagement had Elias breathed to his uncle, the Rabbi Felix. From day to day, from week to week, he had put off the inevitable moment. He knew that nothing which the rabbi could say or do, would have the slightest effect upon him, so far as shaking his resolution was concerned ; but he supposed that there would be a scene, and a very stormy and disagreeable one, and he dreaded it ; and so he had procrastinated—or, as he phrased it, had waited for a favorable opportunity. He had gone on living in the same house, eating at the same board, with this old man, his uncle ; chatting with him, even, as a precaution against possible suspicions, saying his prayers and reading his Bible with him, and all the while keeping the one dominant fact of his life shut close in from sight. Sometimes the secret weighed very heavily upon his mind, pressed hard for utterance, got even so far as the tip of his tongue. But then, asking

himself, "What good—what but bad—could come of my telling him?" he would decide to wait for yet another while. Perhaps the rabbi, on his side, had noticed that Elias was absent from home a good deal; but, considering his youth, and that his home was such a dull, unattractive place, what wonder? What else could be expected? I must not forget to state that some rumors to the effect that Elias Bacharach intended to get married, were circulating in the Jewish world—which is, of all worlds, the one most prone to gossip—but these failed to specify the lady's name, and took for granted that she was a Jewess; and the rabbi was far too much of a recluse to be reached by them, any how.

With the Redwoods Elias had been perfectly frank. He had said to the old man: "I suppose you will think that the only relative I have in this quarter of the world—my uncle, Dr. Gedaza—ought to call upon you; and I suppose you'll think it very singular if he doesn't. But I had better tell you candidly that he will strongly disapprove of my marriage, simply and solely on the ridiculous ground that Christine happens not to have been born a Jewess. I hope you won't let this have the slightest influence whatever upon you; because I'm a man, of full age and sound mind, master of my own purse and person, and he's only my uncle; and, with all due respect, I can't see that my marriage is any of his business." In the end, both Christine and her father had accepted Elias's view of the case.

Time moved steadily forward, and now it was the night of Tuesday, the first of May, and to-morrow Elias's happiness would be sealed and consummated. He and Christine had spent a very ecstatic evening with each other ; but, of course, by and by it behooved him to take his leave ; and so, toward eleven o'clock, he rose and began the process. About midway in it, however, he broke off and said abruptly : " Oh, by the by, I forgot to tell you something."

" Ah ? " she queried. " What ? "

" An idea I had."

" An idea ? "

" Yes ; about—about breaking the news to my uncle."

" News ? What news ? "

" Why, *the* news—the news of our marriage."

" Why ! " she exclaimed, with an expression of very serious surprise. " Do you mean to say that—that you haven't done that yet ? "

" No ; not yet. That's just the point. You see—"

" Oh, Elias," she interrupted, in a tone of emphatic rebuke, " I supposed, of course, you had told him long ago. You ought to have told him. That wasn't right."

" What difference does it make ? I have waited about it, because it would only have raised trouble between him and me, without doing a particle of good to either. There's no end to the bother and complications it would have caused. He lives in

my house, you know ; and if we had had a row, he would have felt obliged to clear out, and all that. So I kept my own counsel ; and I'm very glad I did. For now my idea is to say nothing to him at all ; but after we're safely aboard-ship, and started for the other side, I'll send him a letter by the pilot. That will spare both of us a very painful and unprofitable interview."

"Oh, but it's not fair, it's not honorable, it's not respectful. He's your uncle—your own mother's brother—and you owe it to him not to do that—not to go and get married without even letting him know. You ought to have told him long ago. It will hurt his feelings awfully, when he finds out how long you have kept it from him—when he finds that you have waited till the very eleventh hour. Now you must tell him right straight away—as soon as you possibly can—to-night, as soon as you reach home. Promise me that you will."

"But, Christine—"

"No, no, no ! Unless you want to make me very unhappy, you'll promise to tell him right away. That letter by the pilot ! I don't understand how you could have thought of such a thing ! It would be cruel and—and it would be *cowardly* ! There !"

Elias tried to argue the matter. But Christine put her foot down, and vowed, with a look of inflexible determination upon her gentle face, that she would never, never, forgive him, unless he made a clean breast of it to the rabbi that very night.

"But it is late. What if he should have gone to bed?" he suggested feebly.

"Then wake him up."

Of course, before they parted, he had pledged himself to do exactly as she wished ; and she, pacified, went off to bed, whether to sleep or to lie awake, in either case, we may be sure, to dream of the happiness that was ripening for her in the womb of time.

Elias did not enjoy his journey home that night. His frame of mind was by no means such as, on general principles, one would expect of a man in his position—a man who had just said his last farewell to the lady whom he loved, and whom the morrow was to make his bride. His imagination running on ahead of his person, entered the rabbi's study, and rehearsed the scene that would there shortly have to be enacted in very truth. Elias was surprised at the excessive dread he felt. He strove to reason it away, repeating to himself, "He can do nothing, absolutely nothing. He can only talk ; and talk doesn't hurt." But all the same, when he arrived in front of his house, and realized that the long-deferred moment was actually at hand, his heart quaked within him, and a sudden perspiration broke out upon his forehead. However, there was no help for it. He had promised ; and he was bound to keep his promise. So, drawing a deep breath, and swallowing his reluctance, he opened the rabbi's study door.

IX.

THE rabbi sat before his empty fire-place, with slippered feet upon the hearth, reading to himself, in a whisper, from the current number of *The Jewish Messenger*. He raised his eyes absent-mindedly upon Elias's face, where they rested for an instant, vacant of expression. Then, suddenly, they lighted up, but with a light which was manifestly that of alarm. Throwing aside his newspaper, and half rising from his chair, "What—what is the matter with you?" he cried. "What has happened?"

"Happened? The matter with me?" stammered Elias, halting. "What do you mean?"

"Why, boy, you're as pale as death. You look—you look as though you had seen a ghost."

Elias forced a laugh, a faint one.

"Nonsense," he said. "I'm all right. Perhaps it's the shade of your lamp. The light, coming through that green, is enough to make any one look livid."

He sat down opposite the rabbi, and struggled hard to appear nonchalant and at his ease, even going to the length of lighting a cigarette. He must have met with some success; for presently the rabbi, who had not ceased to regard him anxiously, observed with an air of relief, "Yes, I guess it *was* the lamp-shade. Now that you're seated and out of the range of it, you look as usual. But when

you first came in, I declare, you gave me quite a turn." With which he picked up his newspaper, found his place, and resumed his whispered reading.

Thus for a few minutes. Then, tossing his half-consumed cigarette into the grate, "I wanted to have a little talk with you to-night, Uncle Felix, if you don't mind," Elias said.

"Of course, I don't mind," the rabbi returned kindly, lowering his paper. "What did you want to say?"

"Something that will surprise you, I suppose. I wanted to tell you that I am thinking of—of getting married."

"Ah, indeed!" cried the rabbi, his face breaking into a smile. "Thinking of getting married! Well, I'm glad, right glad, to hear it. It's—you're twenty-seven, aren't you?—it's high time."

"So it is," Elias assented, conscious of a certain dismal humor in the situation.

There befell a silence, during which the rabbi, still with a smile upon his lips, seemed to be revolving the intelligence in his mind.

Pretty soon, "Yes, I admit, it does surprise me," he continued, "for, to speak the truth, I had set you down for a pretty confirmed woman-hater. But, as I say, it's high time. Men wait too long now-a-days about getting married. In half the weddings that I perform, the bridegrooms are fully thirty-five, and many of them are upwards of forty. Now, in my time, it was different. We used to recognize marriage as a religious obligation—which it is, in

fact—and to look askance at a man who was still single at five-and-twenty. I myself was married at twenty-three."

He paused for a moment, then asked, "Well, have you begun to look around?"

"To look around?" queried Elias, puzzled.

"Exactly—for a young lady," explained the rabbi.

"Oh! Why, no. I found her without looking around."

"Found her? You mean, then, that you have actually made a choice?"

"Why, of course. What did you suppose?"

"Oh, I thought may be you were merely considering the subject abstractly—on general principles—and had decided that the time had come. But you say that you have already chosen the lady. Well, I declare, how close-mouthed you have kept!—I suppose now," he added, "you want me to open negotiations, eh?"

"Negotiations? How do you mean?"

"Why, with her parents, of course. Ask for her hand—declare your sentiments."

"Oh, no; that isn't necessary."

"No? How so?"

"Why, I've done all that for myself. I have proposed, and—and been accepted."

"You have! You don't say so! Oh, you sly, secretive rascal! Well, I congratulate you. You ought to have stuck to the good, old-fashioned custom, and had me make the first advances; but

I congratulate you, all the same. What's her name? Who is she? One of our congregation? Tell me all about her."

The rabbi sat forward in his chair, curiosity incarnate. His pale skin had become slightly flushed. His eyes, beaming over the gold bows of his spectacles, were fixed intently upon his nephew's face.

Elias had not enjoyed this beating about the bush ; but he had lacked both the courage and the tact to put an end to it. Now, however, when its end had arrived naturally, in the course of circumstances, he wished that it might have been indefinitely prolonged ; so great, so unreasonable, was the dread he felt.

" Her name," he began—he looked hard at the floor ; and his voice was a trifle unsteady—" she's a young American lady ; and her name is Redwood—Miss Christine Redwood."

For an instant the rabbi's appearance did not change. It no doubt needed that instant for his mind to appreciate the purport of what his ears had heard. But all at once, the flush across his forehead first deepened to a vivid crimson, and then faded quite away, leaving the skin waxen white, with the blue veins distended upon it. A dart of light, like an electric spark, shot from his eyes, which then filled with an opaque, smoky darkness. His lips twitched a little ; his fingers clenched convulsively. He started backward a few inches into his chair. His attitude was that of a man whose

faculties have been scattered and confounded by a sudden, tremendous blow.

But this attitude the rabbi retained for scarcely the time it takes to draw a breath. Almost at once he seemed to recover himself. His fingers relaxed. His face regained its ordinary composure. In a low voice, with not a trace of perturbation, coldly, even indifferently :

“A young American lady? Miss Christine—? Be kind enough to repeat the name,” he said.

Elias, continuing to stare hard at the floor, repeated it : “Redwood—Miss Christine Redwood.”

Then, with bowed head and trembling heart, he waited for the outbreak which, he supposed, of course, would come. He stared at the floor—taking vague note of the patch of carpet at his feet, remarking how threadbare it was worn, how faded its colors were, remarking even how, at a certain point, a bent pin stuck upward from it—stared at the floor, and waited. But the rabbi spoke no word. The clock on the mantelpiece ticked, ticked, ticked ; suddenly, from its interior, sounded a quick whir of machinery, and then a single clear stroke of its bell—half-after midnight. Next instant the clock of St. George’s church, across the park, responded with a deep, reverberating boom. Elias waited ; and still the rabbi did not speak. Such silence was incomprehensible, exasperating, ominous. All the more violent, for this delay, would the storm be, when it broke, Elias thought. He did not dare to look the

rabbi squarely in the face, to meet his eye ; but he stole a glance, swift enough to escape arrest, and yet deliberate enough to see that the rabbi was still seated, just as before, in his chair ; and then he returned to his contemplation of the carpet. Yes, the silence was exasperating, even unbearable. Why did he not say his say, scold, plead, exhort, curse, empty the phials of his wrath, and have done with it ? Elias waited till his over-taxed nerves could endure the suspense no longer ; when, teeth gritted, tone defiant, "Redwood," he repeated for a third time. "Don't you hear ?"

The rabbi vouchsafed no syllable in reply ; but his lips curled in a slight, enigmatic smile.

Again Elias found himself constrained to wait. He waited till the silence had again grown insupportable. At length, springing to his feet, "For God's sake," he cried, "why—why don't you speak ?"

"Speak ?" echoed the rabbi, with the same inscrutable smile, and a scarcely perceptible shrug of the shoulders. "What is there to say ?"

"Say—say any thing. I don't care what you say," Elias cried passionately. "Only, this silence—if you want to drive me crazy, keep it up. It makes me feel as if—as if my head would burst open." He crushed his hands hard against his temples. "Go on. Speak. Curse me. Any thing. Only, don't sit there that way, as though you had been struck dumb."

"Come, come, Elias ! Stop your bellowing.

Stop storming about like that. Sit down—there, where you were before. Be quiet. Be rational. Then, if you wish, we can talk.”

Elias dropped into his chair.

“I’m quiet. I’m rational,” he groaned. “Go ahead.”

“Well, really,” the rabbi submitted. “I don’t see that there is much to be said.”

“Not much to be said! For heaven’s sake! Haven’t you heard? Haven’t you understood? Haven’t I told you that I am going to marry a Christian?”

“There’s no need of screaming at me, Elias. Yes. I have understood. When—when was it your intention that this marriage should take place?”

“To-morrow. It takes place to-morrow evening at half past eight o’clock.”

“Indeed? So soon? Why have you waited so long about telling me? Or, having waited so long, why did you tell me at all?”

“I don’t know. Many reasons. I thought—”

“Oh, well, it doesn’t matter. It makes no difference,” the rabbi interrupted, and again relapsed into silence.

“Well?” ventured Elias, interrogatively.

“Well, what?” returned the rabbi.

“Well, why don’t you go on? Finish what you’ve got to say?”

“I don’t know that I have any thing more to say.”

"Any thing *more* ! You haven't said any thing at all, as yet."

"Well, then, I don't know that I have any thing at all to say."

"Good God !" Elias broke out furiously. "You—you'll—what *is* the matter with you, any how ? I tell you that I am going to marry a Christian ; and you—you sit there—like—like I don't know what—and answer that you have nothing to say about it !"

"Precisely ; because, indeed, I *have* nothing to say about it—except this, that the marriage will never take place. That's all."

"Never take place ! I give it up. What in reason's name do you mean ?"

"I mean what I say."

"That we—she and I—are—are not going to get married, after all ?"

"Yes."

"But haven't I told you that our marriage comes off to-morrow night ?"

"Yes."

"Well ?"

"Well, you have told me so ; but you are mistaken."

"Mistaken ! I think you must have gone mad."

"Not in the least. The marriage won't come off to-morrow night, nor any other night."

"I should like to know what's to prevent it."

"It will be prevented."

"I don't just see how."

"Wait, and you *shall* see."

"By whom? By you, for example? If so, by what means?"

"Oh, no; not by me."

"By whom, then?"

Elias put this question, smiling defiantly.

For a moment there was a deep stillness in the room, broken only by the ticking of the clock. Then the rabbi rose to his feet, advanced close to Elias, and stood facing him. With an expression of immense dignity upon his white, delicately modeled features, quietly, gravely, in a tone of serene conviction: "Elias," he said, "by the Lord our God, the God of Israel."

Elias's smile died out. He recoiled with a start into his chair; and for an instant all the blood left his lips. But then, with an attempt at lightness which was somehow very unbecoming, "Oh, so? You mean, I suppose, that the Lord will strike me dead—or afflict me with a paralysis—or something of that kind—yes?"

Quite unscathed by his nephew's irony, slowly, seriously, without raising his voice, "I mean, Elias," the rabbi pursued, "that you had better beware. You expected me—when, at midnight, you burst in here, pale with guilt, and made the announcement that within twenty-four hours you were going to transgress all the laws of our religion, by marrying a woman who is not of our race or faith—you expected me—didn't you?—to reason with you, to picture to you the awful consequences that must follow upon such a sin, to plead with you in the

name of your dead father and mother, to entreat you, to endeavor in every possible way to get you to give up your insane, suicidal idea. You expected me, as you have said, to curse you ; or, that failing, to fall upon my knees, and beseech you.—Well, you see—and, to judge from your actions, you see with some surprise, even with some disappointment—that I do none of these things, that I do nothing of the kind. Why? Because, as I have told you, the marriage you speak of will never take place. There is not a single chance of its taking place—not any more chance of its taking place, than there is of the sun's failing to rise to-morrow morning. Neither I, nor any man, need raise a finger, need speak a word. The Lord God of Israel, Elias Bacharach, has His eye upon you. He will prevent this marriage from taking place. And all I say to you is—what I said at the beginning—look out ! Beware ! ”

The rabbi had spoken very earnestly, but very quietly, and without a touch of excitement. Having concluded, he went back to his chair, took off his spectacles, wiped their lenses with his handkerchief, and unconcernedly replaced them upon the bridge of his nose.

Elias had sat still, nervously twitching his foot, and allowing his eyes to roam vacantly about the room. Now, for a moment, he kept his peace. Then, “ You don't state the grounds for this singular and no doubt comforting belief, nor do you specify the methods by which the Lord is to accomplish the result. I should like to know, if it is the

some to you, just what to expect. Am I, as I suggested, to be incapacitated bodily? By paralysis? By death? Or what?"

"I don't choose to state the grounds of my belief, Elias, nor to specify in any respect, nor, indeed, to discuss the question at all with you—especially when you see fit to adopt that insolent and blasphemous tone of voice. I will simply repeat—what I hope you will reflect upon, and take to heart—that you had best beware. Now I wish to be left alone. I shall see you again in the morning. Good-night."

Elias rose.

"Well, I'm glad you take the matter so easily, Uncle Felix; and since you practically put me out, good-night."

X.

AS he had done upon a former and slightly similar occasion, and as he was wont to do whenever his spirits were in any degree perturbed, Elias climbed up-stairs to his studio, and sat down at the window. All day long the sun had shone bright and hot; but ever since dusk the sky had been clouding over; and now, plainly, a thunder-storm was near at hand. The atmosphere was thick, still, tepid. With increasing frequency, shafts of jagged lightning tore their way through the clouds, and were followed by long, sullen, distant rumblings, as

of suppressed fury somewhere. Suddenly a breeze sprang up, swelling quickly into a strong wind. The air filled with dust. The branches of the trees, over in the park, groaned aloud ; and from here and there came the noise of banging shutters, and of loose things generally being knocked about. The flames in the street-lamps below flared violently. Some of them went out. Big drops of lukewarm water began to fall, splashing audibly where they struck. All at once, a blinding flash, a deafening peal of thunder, from right overhead ; and the rain came pouring down in torrents.

Now, of course, Elias Bacharach—he in whose soul the man had long since worsted the Jew, and reason abolished superstition—of course, Elias knew that what his uncle had said about the God of Israel interposing to prevent his marriage, was the sheerest sort of rubbish. That the old gentleman had spoken in good faith—that he really believed in the validity of his own prophecies, and had not uttered them merely with a view to working upon his hearer's imagination, and exciting his fears—Elias could not doubt ; for to resort to such strategy was not, he conceived, in the character of the artless and simple-minded rabbi. But that very good faith only proved him to be the victim of a most preposterous delusion. For himself, Elias had no misgivings. As confident as a mortal can be of any future event, in this world of uncertainties, so confident was he that the morrow evening would make of him and Christine man and wife. Of

course, there was always the unforeseen to be allowed for ; accidents were always possible. But if he had none but supermundane obstacles to dread, then he might regard his marriage as already an accomplished fact. And, notwithstanding, Elias felt very much disturbed—very much annoyed, mystified, and ill-at-ease. All that the rabbi had said was stuff and nonsense, at absolute, obvious variance with science, with simple common sense—fit material for laughter, for a certain contemptuous pity ; but, nevertheless, every time that Elias recalled just *what* the rabbi had said, and the rabbi's manner of saying it, he felt a sharp, inward pang, very like terror ; he had to catch a quick, short breath ; and he confessed to himself that he would give a good deal to be enabled to get inside the rabbi's consciousness, and learn the grounds on which he based his extraordinary, but apparently secure, conviction, and find out exactly what form of divine interference he anticipated. Despite his clear perception of the rabbi's sophistry, he caught himself furtively querying : "Can there be any thing in it?" Despite his assurance that all would go well, he caught himself furtively wishing that all was well over, and his marriage-certificate signed and sealed. "There is not a single chance of its taking place—not any more chance of its taking place than there is of the sun's failing to rise to-morrow morning." That phrase stuck like a thorn in his mind, and produced a considerable irritation.

This state of things, besides being intrinsically unpleasant, was offensive to Elias's self-esteem. That he, at his age, in his stage of enlightenment, should be unsettled by the senseless menaces of a superstitious old bigot ! Like a child frightened by its nurse's bugaboo. And yet, there it was again, the sharp, internal twinge, so like the sting of terror ; and there again he fell to speculating upon what the causes of the old man's singular belief could be.

He sat at his window, peered out into the night, and tried to think of something else. He tried to think of Christine, tried to call up her image, tried to live over again the evening that he had passed with her, tried to picture to himself the happiness that the coming day held in store. No use. "There is no more chance of its taking place, than there is of the sun's failing to rise to-morrow morning." The rabbi's voice kept ringing in his ears, like a hateful tune that one has heard, and can't get rid of. The painful emotions it awoke, kept rankling in his bosom, and crowded out all the sweeter ones that sought to enter. He could fix his mind permanently upon no subject but the rabbi's irrational predictions. He tried to stir up a little interest in the thunder-storm. There it was, raging furiously just outside his open window ; rain dashing earthward like a loosened flood ; lightning-flash following lightning-flash, and thunder-clap thunder-clap, in rapid, tumultuous, terrifying succession ; enough, one would fancy, to arrest and

to appall the attention of any conscious being, human or even brute, within the reach of sight or sound ; but Elias's attention it held for a moment only. Then his mind sped back to the subject which he was most anxious to avoid. "Not a single chance—not any more chance than there is of the sun's failing to rise !"

The clock of St. George's Church struck two. What was the rabbi doing now ? Elias wondered. Had he gone to bed ? Or was he, perhaps, still down stairs in his study ?—praying, perhaps, that the Lord would in no wise dishonor His servant's pledges. At this notion, Elias involuntarily ground his teeth. "Praying for mischief !" he thought. "And what—what if, after all, there should be some efficacy in that sort of prayer !" — He remembered and rejoiced that he had told the rabbi nothing further about Christine than her name—neither her father's name, nor her place of abode. Otherwise, the rabbi might have deemed it his duty to constitute himself heaven's instrument, and, by intimidating the bride, have caused pain and trouble, if not, temporarily at least, have prevented the wedding from proceeding. In his fanaticism, what might he not be capable of doing ?

The rain, beating upon the window-sill, spattered inward, wetting Elias's clothing. When, by and by, he became aware that his coat-sleeve had got soaked through, he left his seat, closed the window, and lighted the gas.

His studio—in anticipation of his coming trip to

Europe, and subsequent change of residence—he had pretty well dismantled, having packed away in dark closets and camphor-chests, the most part of such goods and chattels as dust or moth can corrupt. Little, indeed, was left out, save three or four chairs, a life-size lay-figure stripped of its draperies, an easel or two, and a few time-blackened plaster casts fastened to the wall. But over in one corner there was heaped up an assortment of miscellaneous odds and ends, the accumulation of half a dozen years, which, now, as his eye noted it, Elias remembered, he had meant to overhaul, with a view to laying aside whatever he should think worth keeping, and consigning the rest to the rag-and-bottle man. In the hurry and excitement of the past few days, however, he had forgotten all about it.

For a little while Elias stood still, blinking in the new-made gas-light, and gazing rather vacantly at this old lumber-pile. Then, suddenly, a gleam as of inspiration brightening his features, “What time,” he asked himself, “could be better than the present? If I go to bed, I shall only toss about, without sleeping; whereas, if I do this, it will be an improvement upon sitting idle, and brooding, any how.”

With which, straightway, he whipped off his coat, drew up a chair, and, not incurious as to what long-lost objects he might possibly unearth, started upon the forgotten task.

Paint-rags, besmeared with a thousand colors; torn canvases, bearing half-finished, half-begun, or half-obliterated studies; paint-tubes, half-emptied,

in which the remaining paint had congealed, or "fatted"; worn-out brushes, broken palettes, shattered maul-sticks, fragments of old casts and ornaments in plaster or terra-cotta; letters without envelopes, envelopes without letters; newspapers, pamphlets, exhibition catalogues, magazines, circulars, tailor's bills, cracked bottles, cigarette-stumps, cast-off gloves, pocket handkerchiefs, cravats; all sheeted over with fine, black dust, and all exhaling a musty, oily odor; these were the elements that predominated, and most of these Elias tossed pell-mell to the middle of the floor, for the maid to carry away in the morning. To divert one's thoughts from some persistent and exasperating topic, it is a commonplace, there is nothing like busy-ing one's fingers; manual exercise being the surest means to the end of mental rest. Pretty soon Elias's late encounter with his uncle had sunken out of mind—only occasionally, for brief intervals, to struggle up, and agitate the surface—and agreeably interested in his present occupation, he was whistling softly to himself, indifferent alike to the perspiration that bathed his forehead, to the dust that penetrated his nostrils, and to the dirt that took lodgment upon his hands.

Meanwhile, the thunder and lightning had ceased, and the rain had settled into a steady drizzle.

Elias's first notable find was a pretty little gold lead-pencil, one, he recognized, that had been sent him, as a present, on his twenty-first birthday, by an aunt of his—his father's only sister—who lived

in New Orleans, and whom he had never seen. It had got lost, in a most inexplicable manner, very soon after its reception ; and, conscience-smitten, Elias now recollected how he had suspected, to the degree of moral certainty, a poor devil of an Italian model of having stolen it. Well, here it was, intact ; and so, poor Archimede had been innocent, after all.

Holding it in his hand, and examining it a little, before putting it into his pocket, and going on with his work, Elias felt himself suddenly carried backward, for an instant, to the period with which it was associated. Talismanic pencil, that had power to raise the dead, and annihilate the intervening years ! There it lay, in shape, weight, color, in length, breadth, thickness, in all its attributes and dimensions, precisely the same as on that far-off birthday morning, when his mother, to whose care his aunt had entrusted it, delivered it to him, neatly boxed up in pasteboard, wrapped in tissue-paper, and sealed with red sealing-wax. How well he remembered ! It might have been last week. It might almost have been yesterday. And yet, how much, indeed how much, had happened since. At the breakfast-table, she had said, "Here, Elias, here is something your Aunt Rachel has sent you—something that you will prize especially, because she is not at all rich, and has doubtless had to pinch and deny herself, in order to buy it." Then she offered him the parcel, which he, touched, surprised, expectant, took and opened, finding within this same little pencil ; and not it only, but wound

around it, a bit of writing in his Aunt Rachel's hand—the traditional Hebrew *bensch*: “May the Lord make you to be great, like Ephraim and Manasseh!” And immediately, of course, in his boyish enthusiasm, he had set himself down, and put the pencil to its virgin use, by inditing with it a glowing note of thanks—about the only use he ever had put it to, for very soon afterward it disappeared. And then, the rest, the rest of that wonderful, never-to-be-forgotten day! The pride and the triumph of it! The masterpiece of a dinner that his mother had prepared. The check for a dazzling sum of money, that he had found adroitly folded in with his napkin! The toothsome nut-cake, with its twenty-one symbolic candles! The wine that had been drunken to his health! The speech that the rabbi had made, standing up at the head of the table, and haranguing away as though he had had an audience of a thousand, instead of only Elias and his mother—the mother, however, listening amid tears and smiles, and applauding and nodding her head, as the splendid achievements which the future was to behold at the hands of her son, were prophetically described. The watch the rabbi had given him!—the same that was ticking in his waistcoat-pocket at this very instant. And the prayer that the rabbi had chanted! And how Elias himself, with swelling heart, had joined in the invocation: “Holy, holy Lord, Thou Who art one God!” and had vowed silently that, by the Lord's help, he *would* “strive to become good

in the sight of men, and a pride unto his people." How well he remembered, thanks to this little pencil, precisely the same now as then, quite unchanged. But oh, what a changed Elias, he in whose palm it lay ! How all the conditions of his life, and all his interests and purposes in life, and all his convictions about life, had changed since then ! How little he had dreamed in those days of what was coming ! Strange, that he should have had no premonition of it. Strange, that he should have gone on in peace and contentment, treading his level path, forward, forward, unsuspectingly, and never have caught a glimpse, never have got an inkling, of what was waiting for him, of what each step was bringing him so much the nearer to, of what presently was to burst upon him in a glory like that of heaven, and utterly revolutionize himself and all his world. Strange, indeed ! And yet, in those old, simple, tranquil days, he had been happy, very happy, in a simple, tranquil way ; and now, as he looked back at them, they shone suffused in a rose-colored enchantment ; and he could feel his heart reach out toward them, with a strong longing affection, which, though melancholy, was not unmixed with sweetness.

Deep, engrossing, and of long duration, was the train of associations that had thus been started. The church clock across the park rang the half hour, before Elias finally roused himself, and renewed his attack upon the lumber heap.

For a good while he struck nothing more of

interest—nothing that he cared to save, or even to look at twice. But by and by he fished out a sketch-book, which, to judge from the dilapidated state of its binding, must have been pretty old, and over which he paused, beating it against the floor, to rid it of some of its dust, and then opening it, to inspect its contents. On the fly-leaf he found his initials, “E. B.,” and a date, “January, 1876.” Listlessly turning the pages, he was somewhat amused, and a good deal ashamed, to perceive how poor and crude the drawings were—heads, for the most part, with only here and there a full-length figure ; and he congratulated himself not a little that he had thus chanced to run across it, because now he could destroy it, and so make sure that nobody else should ever have the satisfaction of seeing what wretched stuff he had once been capable of perpetrating. He supposed that the sketches had nearly all been intended as portraits, but in the main he could not place them—could not remember the persons who had served as models. One face kept repeating itself ; there were as many as a dozen separate studies of it ; the face of a young man, aged, presumably, nineteen or twenty years ; strangely familiar ; the face of some one, beyond doubt, whom he must have known intimately ; and yet, knitting his brows, and exerting his memory to the utmost, he was quite unable to recall the original. Odd ; and intensely annoying, as baffled memory is apt to be ; until, of a sudden, with a thrill of recognition that was by no means

agreeable, he identified it as himself. A few pages further along, again with a sudden thrill, but this time with a far stronger and deeper one, he came upon a portrait of his mother. It was badly drawn, finical, over-elaborated ; the draperies rigid as iron ; the flesh wooden ; the pose—she was seated, reading—awkward, and anatomically impossible ; and yet, spite of all, it was an excellent, even a startling, likeness ; and happening upon it in this unexpected manner, Elias felt a not unnatural heart-leap and quickening of the pulse. When, or under what circumstances, he had made it, he could not think. He bent forward in his chair, gazed intently at it, and tried hard to recollect. If the date on the fly-leaf was trustworthy, it must, of course, have been after the first of January, 1876 ; but in his own memory, ransack it as he might, he could find no record. This struck him as exceedingly singular ; because, he believed, he had been careful to preserve all the sketches of his mother that he had ever taken, even the most primitive and rudimentary ; and how this one could not only have got mislaid, but entirely have escaped his mind, besides, he was at a complete loss to understand. So bending forward, and gazing intently at it, he tried his best to recollect.

Of what now befell, or seemed to befall, I shall give an account written some two years later by Elias himself, in a letter to Christine :

“ Gradually—as is apt to happen, if you fix your eyes for any length of time upon a single spot in

some small object—gradually the picture blurred, becoming simply a formless smudge upon the white surface of the paper ; a lapse on the part of my eyesight, which I, absorbed in the effort I was making to remember, did not attempt to correct, but which in due time, as was natural, corrected itself ; and again the picture stood out as distinct as before. Now, however, at once, every other thought and every other feeling were swept away, clean out of my head, by a sensation—I shall not be able to define it ; you will easily conceive it ; a sensation half of amazement, half of terror ; for, without having changed in size, the face seemed to have changed totally in quality ; it seemed to have ceased to be a face drawn with black lead upon paper, and to have become a face in veritable flesh and blood. The hair had apparently become *hair*. There was color in the cheeks. And the eyes were liquid, living eyes. They—the eyes—were what most affected me. Large, black, mournful, as her eyes had been in life, they looked into my eyes with an expression—I can't describe it. It was what you would call an expression of intense agony, and of appeal ; as though it were an agony of my causing, and one that she appealed to me to relieve. The lips—bluish white, as her lips were, toward the end of her life—the lips seemed to move, and kept moving, as if trying to speak, but unable to ; until at last *they succeeded* ; and I could have vowed that I heard, in her own recognizable voice, just a little above a whisper, these

words : ' There is no more chance of its taking place than there is of the sun's failing to rise. Beware ! '—the words that my uncle had spoken down stairs. I was so much startled, so much terrified, that I jumped up from my chair. Thereat, instantly, the illusion ended. Again it was only a crude pencil drawing upon the page of my sketch-book. I can't tell how long it had lasted. Very likely not longer than two or three seconds, though it seemed at least as many minutes. I don't think I had breathed once. I don't think my heart had given a single beat. It had literally paralyzed me with fear.

" But now that it was over, I fell back upon my chair, and my heart began to pound like a hammer against my side ; and I sat there, panting and perspiring, like a man exhausted by some tremendous physical exertion. I felt sick and dizzy, and had a racking headache.—Of course, it was a mere optical delusion ; a mere hallucination ; not an actual, objective phenomenon, not a *ghost* ; a mere projection from my own imagination. A long time afterward I talked with a physician about it. The substance of what he said was this : Consider the steadily increasing excitement under which my mind had been laboring for many days, in view of our approaching marriage ; consider the interview that I had had with my uncle, only an hour or two earlier, and the high pitch of agitation to which it had wrought me up ; consider that it was long past my customary bedtime, and that my brain was irri-

tated by lack of sleep, for I had not slept much of any the night before ; consider that my mother was just then the one person uppermost in my thoughts, having been vividly recalled to me first by the pencil I had found, and then by the drawing that I was looking at ; consider finally that my bodily posture—bending over till my chest nearly touched my knees—was such as to keep the blood pent up in my head ; and the occurrence becomes very easily explicable, especially so, as such hallucinations, when people are excited, are not uncommon experiences. This is what the medical man said. It is undoubtedly true ; and something like it I had wit enough to tell myself immediately, at the time. But telling did no good. It is one thing to satisfy your judgment ; another to tranquilize your feelings and hush your imagination. *They* choose to accept the direct testimony of your eyes and ears, rather than the deductions of your common sense. I knew, as I have said, that my nerves had simply played me a trick ; but that knowledge did not prevent me from passing a most wretched, uncomfortable night—the rest of that night, till day-break. The memory of the thing persisted in haunting me, in spite of the efforts I made to forget it. Strive as I might, I could not shake off the fear, the uneasiness, that it had inspired. Thinking of it, even at this distance, I still wince a little. It produced a very deep impression, and must have been, I believe, in large part accountable for, as it was of a piece with, what happened next day—or,

rather, the evening of the same day, for it was now early morning."

XI.

ELIAS speaks of "day-break"; but it can not accurately be said that the day broke at all that morning. The blackness of the night slowly faded into a dismal, lifeless drab. It rained. The wind blew from the north-east. Under it, the branches of the trees, across in the park, swayed strenuously to and fro. The sparrows, with sadly bedraggled plumage, huddled together upon the window-sills, and raised their voices in noisy disputation, as if thereby seeking to screw their courage up, and not mind the sorry weather. The milkman's wagon came rattling down the street. The milkman wore a rubber overcoat. His war-whoop sounded less spirited, less defiant, than its wont.

By and by Elias looked at his watch. It was getting along toward seven o'clock.

Just then somebody rapped upon his studio door. Elias's nerves must indeed have been in a bad way. He started, paled, trembled, recovered himself, and called out, "Come in."

It was the rabbi.

"Good morning, Elias," the rabbi said.

"Good morning," responded Elias, with a none too hospitable inflection.

"So, you haven't been abed? You've been sitting up all night?" the rabbi questioned.

"How do you know that?" was Elias's counter-question.

"I looked for you in your bedroom, and saw that your bed had not been slept in."

"Oh."

After a pause, "What have you been doing, up alone all night?" the rabbi asked.

"Lots of things. A man on the eve of his marriage has plenty to do."

The rabbi stood still for a little while, glancing around the room. Then he sat down. At which, Elias rose.

"If you'll excuse me," he said, "I'll go down stairs. I haven't taken my bath yet."

"Have you said your prayers yet?" inquired the rabbi.

But Elias was already beyond ear-shot in the hall.

When, perhaps a quarter hour later, Elias, emerging from his bath, entered his bedroom, he discovered the rabbi established there at the window.

Wheeling about, and facing his nephew, "You didn't answer my question," the rabbi said.

"What question?"

"I asked whether you had said your prayers this morning."

"Oh."

"Well, have you?"

"No."

"Perhaps lately you have got out of the habit of saying your prayers—yes?"

Elias made no reply. He appeared not to have heard. He was busy fastening the buttons into a shirt-bosom.

"I'll wait till you've finished dressing," said the rabbi.

He went to the window, and stood looking out.

The rabbi's presence troubled Elias exceedingly. But, he thought, considering every thing, the least he could do would be to put up with it as graciously as possible and not grumble. "What do you want with me, any how?" it was his impulse to demand. But he held his tongue, and proceeded with his toilet.

When at last he had tied his cravat and buttoned his coat, "Are you ready now to come down stairs with me?" the rabbi began.

"What for?"

"Several things. Are you ready? Will you come?"

"Oh, I suppose so," Elias answered, and followed the old man from the room.

To himself: "I don't care what he does or says. It may be annoying, but it can't do any serious harm. To-day is the last day; and I'll let him have his own way in every thing, no matter how absurd and exasperating it may be. I'll keep my temper and treat him respectfully, no matter how hard he may try me."

They had reached the front hall of the house. The rabbi put his hand upon the knob of the front parlor door.

"Oh," Elias exclaimed, drawing back, "are you going in there?"

"Yes."

Calling to mind his resolution, Elias gulped down his unwillingness, and said, "Oh, well; all right." But it cost him an effort to do so.

Even during his mother's life-time, the front parlor had been but very seldom used. Since her death, it had not been used at all. Indeed, since the day of her funeral, now nearly three years gone by, Elias had not crossed its threshold. The blinds and windows were kept permanently closed, save when, once a week, the servants entered to sweep and dust.

Now the rabbi pushed open the door, and, stepping aside, signalled Elias to pass in. Elias obeyed. The rabbi followed.

It was dark inside. Only a few pallid rays of daylight leaked through at the edges of the curtains. The air was cold and at the same time oppressive—laden with that stuffy, musty odor, which always pervades an uninhabited, shut-up room. At first, Elias could scarcely see an arm's-length before his face; but, as his eyesight gradually accustomed itself to the obscurity, he was able to make out the forms of the furniture, and to discern upon the walls sundry large black patches which he knew to be pictures.

The rabbi struck a match.

"Take it," he said to Elias, "and light the gas ; I'm not tall enough."

Elias did as he was bidden.

The gas-burner, from disuse, had got clogged with dust. It shot a long, slim tongue of flame up into the air, and gave off a shrill, continuous whistle. Every now and then the flame had a convulsion, the whistle dropped a note or two ; then both returned to their original conditions.

For a New York dwelling-house, it was a spacious room, this parlor ; say, in width twenty feet, by forty in depth. The chairs and sofas, scrupulously wrapped in linen, were ranged along the walls. Over the carpet, completely covering it, stretched a broad sheet of grayish crash. The piano wore a rubber jacket, and had its legs swathed in newspapers. The books in the book-cases—books of the decorative, rather than of the readable order, for the most part—were locked up behind glass doors. The tall mirror, between the windows, shone through a veil of pink mosquito-netting. Supplies of the same material had been stretched across all the pictures.

In front of one of these pictures—that which hung above the mantel-piece—the rabbi now paused, and, raising his arm, pointed to it, in silence.

It was the portrait of a gentleman, full length, life-size, done in oils. The gentleman rested one hand upon a pile of ponderous, calf-bound volumes

—law-books, or medical works, they looked like—that towered aloft from the floor. In his other hand, he held an unrolled scroll of parchment, upon which big black Hebrew characters were inscribed. Of artistic value the picture had little, or none at all; but it had another sort of value: it was a portrait of Elias's father.

The rabbi pointed to it in silence. Elias thought the rabbi's proceeding a little theatrical; but he made no comment.

By and by the rabbi lowered his arm, and faced about. Having done which, he raised his other arm, and this time brought his index finger to bear upon a portrait of Elias's mother.

Theatrical, certainly; disagreeably so, too; Elias thought.

At this point there befell an interruption which had somewhat the effect of an anti-climax. The breakfast-bell rang.

"Well," said the rabbi, "let's go to breakfast."

Elias turned off the gas. They left the parlor, and went down stairs to the dining-room.

There, having taken their places at the table, the rabbi extracted a handkerchief from his pocket, and with it covered his head. Elias did likewise. Whereupon the rabbi chanted the usual grace before meat. At its conclusion, both he and Elias replaced their handkerchiefs in their pockets, and the maid-servant brought the coffee.

For a while neither nephew nor uncle spoke.

At last, "What are you thinking about, Elias?" the rabbi asked.

"I was thinking, if you wish to know," Elias answered, "of my great happiness—of the fact that to-day the lady whom I love is to become my wife."

"Ah, so? It doesn't seem to improve your appetite," returned the rabbi. "You're not eating especially well."

He made Elias the object of a curious, meditative glance; then pursued: "Don't misunderstand me, Elias. It isn't at all my aim to dissuade you from this marriage. That, as I told you last night, would be a work of supererogation. But I *should* like to ask you just a single question. Suppose your mother were still alive, would you entertain for an instant the idea of marrying a Christian?"

"I don't know?"

"You don't know?"

"Well, probably not."

"Good. That is what I thought. And now, let me ask you one question more. Is it your opinion that, simply because your mother has died, you are absolved from all obligations toward her, and are at liberty to act in a way, which, if she were still with us, it would break her heart to have you act in? Is that your opinion?"

Elias did not reply. He colored up, however, and bit his lip.

The rabbi waited a moment, then queried, "Well?"

"Well, what?"

"You don't answer."

"I don't mean to answer. It isn't a fair question," said Elias.

The rabbi gave a short, contemptuous laugh.

Again for a while neither of them spoke. Elias was uncomfortably conscious that the rabbi's eyes were fixed upon his face. He stood it as long as he could. Then, abruptly, he got up.

"Please excuse me," he said, "I have something to do up-stairs."

With which he left the room.

He went to his studio and locked the door behind him. He had told the rabbi that he had something to do. But the truth was that he had nothing to do, except to kill time as best he could until the hour should arrive for him to start for Sixty-third Street. He had arranged not to call upon Christine at all that day. He thought it would be more considerate to leave her alone with her father. Now, the day stretched out like an eternity before his imagination. Would it ever wear away?

It occurred to him that it might not be a bad plan to get some sleep, if he could ; so he retired to his bedroom, and threw himself all dressed upon his bed.

Pretty soon he heard a rap upon the door.

"Who is it ?" he demanded.

"I," the rabbi's voice responded.

"He'll end by driving me mad," thought Elias.

"What do you want ?" he asked aloud.

"I want to see you."

"Well, I'm busy."

"I shan't interfere with your business."

"I'm going to sleep."

"I shan't prevent you from sleeping."

Elias said nothing further. The rabbi came in.

"I only wanted to sit with you. It is better that I should be on hand," explained the rabbi, and sat down near the window.

Elias closed his eyes and tried hard to sleep. But he could not sleep. It is doubtful whether, in view of his approaching wedding, he could have slept, under the most soothing circumstances. Under the actual circumstances, it was like trying to sleep while some one is sticking pins into you. Elias strove to be philosophical. "Why should I allow his mere presence to irritate me as it does?" he asked himself. Whatever the correct answer to this inquiry may have been, the fact remained that the rabbi's mere presence did irritate him to an excessive degree. He bore it for a few minutes silently. At length, flinging his philosophy overboard, he jumped up from his bed, and announced vehemently, "Well, I'm going out."

"Ah," said the rabbi, quietly, "I'll go with you."

"Thanks," replied Elias, "but I prefer to go alone."

"I'm sorry," said the rabbi; "but it is my duty."

"What's your duty?"

"It is my duty not to let you leave my sight to-day."

At this Elias lost his self-control.

"In heaven's name," he blurted out, "do—do you mean to say that you're going to stick to me like this all day?"

"I should fail in my duty toward you, if I did not."

"Well then, do you—do you know what you'll do?" cried Elias, in a loud, infuriated voice.

"No ; what ?" questioned the rabbi, composedly.

"Good God ! You—you'll drive me out of my senses. You make me feel as though my head would split open. You—you—" His voice choked in his throat. His face had become burning red.

"Look out," said the rabbi. "You'll burst a blood-vessel, if you carry on like that."

"Well, then, for mercy's sake, leave me alone. Go down stairs about your business. Leave me here to attend to mine."

The rabbi did not speak. He made no move to obey.

"Don't you hear?" Elias cried.

"Yes."

"Well, why don't you go?"

"I have told you. It is my duty to stay."

"God help me, if you weren't an old man, and my uncle, I—I'd—" Elias faltered. His clenched fists completed the sentence.

"Put me out? But I *am* an old man, and your uncle ; and so you won't, eh?" rejoined the rabbi, with maddening coolness.

"You must forgive me," said Elias, recovering

a little his self-possession. "I ought not to have threatened you. I didn't mean to. But you don't know how you make me suffer. You don't know what torture it is."

"Oh, that's all right. You needn't apologize," the rabbi said.

"But what I ask," Elias went on, "I ask as a kindness, please leave me alone."

"That," returned the rabbi, "is a request which I am compelled to deny."

Elias stood still for an instant, as if undetermined what to do. He felt the blood rush angrily to his brain, and then sink away, leaving a violent ache behind it. "Well, I suppose I'll have to grin and bear it, then," he said by and by, and dropped upon a chair.

After an interval of silence Elias began, with sufficient coolness, "Would you mind telling me *why* you consider it your duty to remain with me all day?"

"It is my duty to be on hand, to be at your side, when the moment of your need shall arrive. It may be any moment now."

"Of my need? I don't understand."

"When the Lord manifests Himself," the rabbi explained.

"Oh," said Elias, and relapsed into silence. He added presently, "I'm going down stairs, to get a glass of water," and rose.

"You'll come back?" questioned the rabbi,

"Yes, I suppose so."

But when he had reached the foot of the staircase, and saw his hat hanging from the rack near the vestibule door, a temptation presented itself which was too strong for flesh and blood to resist. He caught his hat up, and put it upon his head, and dashed out into the street. It was raining. He had no umbrella. But he did not mind. He walked rapidly, without an objective point, without even noticing what direction he followed.

XII.

AT first, as might have been expected, Elias's sensation was simply one of immense relief—relief to have got clear of the house, to have escaped the forced companionship of his uncle. But, of course, the inherent elasticity of healthy human nature was bound ere long to assert itself. There was bound to ensue not relief only, but reaction. A weight had been lifted from off his spirits ; they, compliant to the law of their being, rebounded—sprang up far above their ordinary level. From unwonted depression, his mood leaped to unwonted exaltation. It seemed as though a great billow of happiness broke over him, and sent a glow of delicious warmth penetrating to the innermost fibers of his consciousness. A flood of jubilant thoughts broke loose in his brain, and swept away the last vestige of disquiet that had been lurking

there. Forgotten were the pains and fears of the night ; sunken quite out of mind, the exasperation and the anger of the past few hours. The love of Christine burned hot in his heart. The realization that this very night she was to become his bride, his wife, radiated like a light through his senses. So intense, indeed, was his thought of her, that he could all but see her in visible shape before him, smiling upon him through her bright brown eyes, offering him her sweet red lips to kiss. He could all but feel the warmth and softness of her hand in his, and breathe the dainty perfume which, flower-like, she shed upon the air that circled round her. His joy lent lightness to his footstep. If he had worn the winged sandals of Mercury, he could not have marched along with greater buoyancy or speed. It sharpened all his faculties for pleasure, and deadened all his sensibilities to discomfort, like rich, strong wine. The rain, beating through his clothing, and wetting his skin—that was a pleasure. The wind, blowing in his face, brisk and cold—that was a pleasure. It was a pleasure to tread the soppy, slippery sidewalk, a pleasure to gaze down the long, dark vistas of the streets. The atmosphere, rain-cleansed, had a fresh, invigorating smell.

He wanted very much to go and see his lady-love, but he debated with himself whether he had better. In the first place, it seemed only right and delicate not to intrude upon the privacy of father and daughter this last day. It seemed as though

he owed this much to Redwood. But then, too, as she did not expect him, he would have to explain the reasons for his coming ; and he was loth to tell her the story of what had happened since their leave-taking of last night. It would distress and worry her ; and would it not, also, reveal a certain weakness, at least a too great impressionability, in himself ? Besides, to descend to minor considerations, with garments dripping wet, he was in no fit state to present himself before her. He would be sure to excite her apprehension lest he had caught a cold. Excellent arguments against yielding to his inclination, unquestionably ; notwithstanding which, however, and even while his brain was busy formulating them, his muscles of locomotion, controlled by his unconscious will, were bearing him steadily and rapidly toward the quarter of the city in which Christine lived. And by and by, with a good deal of surprise, he found that he had arrived at the corner of Eighth Avenue and Sixty-third Street, and was within eye-shot of Redwood's door.

Here he halted. The arguments against proceeding pressed upon him with renewed force. He cast a longing glance over at the house, swallowed his desire, right-about faced, and walked away.

A few strides brought him to the edge of Central Park. He turned in.

The park, of course, was deserted. A single moist and melancholy policeman kept guard at the gate. His features betokened a gloomy, phlegmatic

wonder, as Elias, without an umbrella, passed him by.

The air in the park bore a racy, earthy odor, brought out by the rain. The young leaves of the trees, pale green, fluttered in bright contrast against the background of dull gray cloud. The green-sward had profited by its bath, and gleamed with a silken luster. It was very quiet. The pattering of the rain-drops, the rustling of the foliage in the wind, and now and then the note of a venturesome bird, were the only sounds. Of town noises, there were none. New York might have lain a hundred leagues away. All of which Elias, as he trudged along, was dimly but agreeably aware of. It had cost him dear to give up his wish to see his sweetheart ; and now he was seeking consolation among these leafy pathways, where he and she had so often sauntered side by side, and where every thing vividly recalled her. Ere a great while he had reached that pine-topped rock which had been their habitual resting-place, and was to be—! He climbed to the summit of it. He had never before been here without her. His heart throbbed hard, so strong and so sweet were the memories that thronged upon him.

But, standing still, he pretty soon began to realize that a wet skin is not after all an unmitigated luxury. He began to feel cold. It occurred to him for the first time that he had perhaps been imprudent, that at any rate he had better go home now, and get into dry clothes. Yet, if he went

home, he would have to meet the rabbi again ; and, by the by, the rabbi doubtless supposed that he had deliberately deceived him—had slipped out of the room on the pretext of wanting a glass of water, with the deliberate intention of not coming back. But during his outing he had gained considerable fortitude ; his repugnance for the notion of the rabbi's society had abated a good deal ; and, looking forward, he thought that he should not find it half so objectionable as he had done a while ago. For the matter of deception, the rabbi was at liberty to believe whatever he chose. Such deception would have been justifiable, any how—would have been practiced in self-defense.

He looked at his watch, and saw with astonishment that it was three o'clock. He had taken no note of time, but he was surprised to learn that so much had glided by. He would have to go home, any way, before long now, to make ready for the evening. Without further delay, he turned his face toward the outlet of the park, and marched off at a rapid gait.

He let himself into the house as noiselessly as he could, mounted directly to his bedroom, shot the bolt, and at once set about changing his clothes. But in a very few minutes there came a tap at the door. He knew perfectly well who it was : nevertheless, he called out, " Who's there ? "

" I," answered the rabbi.

" Well, what do you want ? "

" I want to see you. You know what I want."

"Well, I can't let you in just now. I'm undressed."

"That makes no difference. I sha'n't mind that."

"Oh, but *I* should mind it."

The rabbi remained silent for a moment ; then, "Do you think it was exactly honorable, the way you acted ?" he inquired.

"What way ?"

"Telling me an untruth, and then stealing out of the house ?"

"I didn't mean to tell you an untruth. It was an inspiration, after I had left you. Any how, all's fair in love and war, you know."

Elias chuckled softly to himself.

"What are you laughing at ?" the rabbi asked.

"I'm not laughing."

"Well, nothing has happened ? You're all right ?"

"Yes ; I haven't been struck by lightning yet."

"Don't talk like that, Elias. It's blasphemous."

Elias made no answer.

Presently the rabbi said, "Well, aren't you ready to let me in yet ?"

"No."

"How soon will you be ?"

"I don't know."

"Five minutes ?"

"No, I guess not. I guess not at all."

"Why not ?"

"Because, frankly, your presence is irksome to me."

"How so?"

"Oh, I can't analyze it. You make me feel uncomfortable. Put yourself in my place, and you'll understand."

"You're mistaken, Elias. It isn't I that makes you feel uncomfortable."

"Who, then?"

"Nobody. It's your guilty conscience."

"So? My guilty conscience doesn't trouble me much, when you're not around."

"How about last night?"

"What do you mean?"

"Why, it kept you awake all night, didn't it?"

"Oh."

"Well, didn't it?"

"Gammon. I was busy, making my preparations for this evening."

"Oh, that reminds me. At what time is it your intention to start?"

"Start?"

"Yes, for the place of the wedding."

"Why do you want to know?"

"So as to be ready."

"Ready for what?"

"To start with you."

"Good heavens! You don't mean to say that you expect to go with me to the wedding?"

"Certainly."

"O, well, really, I can't let you."

"Why not?"

"I can't let you make a scene there. You may plague *me* as much as you like. But I can't have any disturbance at the wedding."

"You ought to know me well enough not to fear my making a disturbance. I'm not in the habit of making disturbances."

"Well, then, what do you want to go for?"

"Simply to be there."

"But I thought—I thought my own going was to be prevented."

"Oh, no, I never said that. You may be suffered to *go*. It is the performance of the wedding ceremony that will be prevented."

"Oh, then you think the 'moment of my need' has been put off a little?"

"I don't know. I say, you may be permitted to continue straight up to the brink, but before the marriage is consummated, the Lord will interfere."

"His confidence is weakening," thought Elias, and held his tongue.

"Well?" questioned the rabbi.

"Well, what?"

"At what hour shall I be ready?"

"You promise not to make a row?"

"You needn't be afraid."

"And to conduct yourself exactly as though you were an ordinary guest?"

"I generally conduct myself as a gentleman, don't I?"

“ Well, then, I mean to leave here at a quarter before eight.”

“ All right,” said the rabbi ; “ and now it is a quarter after four. Since you refuse to let me in, I’ll go and sit in my own bedroom. I might catch cold, standing here in the hall. Call me if any thing should happen.”

For the sake of killing time, Elias dawdled as long as he could over his toilet. When, at length, it was completed, he picked up a book, and, seating himself at the window, tried to read. But it was no use. His mind wandered. The thought of his wedding was the only thought that he could keep fast hold of. He was very much excited and very impatient. He wished heartily that it was over and done with, and thus all room for doubt or accident excluded. He wondered how he would manage to survive the remaining hours. What a pity that he had not left something till the last moment to be attended to. Then he would have had an occupation. But, unfortunately, every arrangement was complete. He had packed all his trunks, and sent them off to the steamer. A shawl-strap and a hand-satchel were the only luggage not thus disposed of ; and these, also, were packed and locked. Well, he must busy himself with something ; and so by and by he proceeded slowly to unpack the hand-satchel, and thereupon forthwith to pack it over again. He had about finished, when the dinner-bell rang. That meant half-past six.

The dinner-bell sounded musically in Elias's ears, partly because he thought that he was hungry, chiefly because the process of dining would consume a certain quantity of time.

He found the rabbi already established at the table. He observed, with a half contemptuous, half annoyed, sense of its childishness, that the rabbi had discarded his customary white cravat for a black one—a thing which he never did except when he had a funeral to conduct.

The two men covered their heads. The rabbi intoned his grace. The servant brought in the eatables. Elias asked her to go out to the livery-stable, and order a carriage for a quarter to eight. She had been employed in the Bacharach household as long as Elias could remember, this servant, Maggie. Now she felt entitled to display a little friendly curiosity.

"Excuse me," said she, "for asking; but is it true, Mr. Elias, that you're going to get married to-night?"

Elias was about to answer, when the rabbi interposed:

"Who has been putting such a notion into your head? Of course, it isn't true. When Mr. Elias gets married, you shall be invited to the wedding, Maggie."

Elias did not care to join his uncle in debate. Maggie went off upon her errand. They dined without speaking. The gentle clink of their knives and forks sounded painfully distinct.

Elias's excitement, his nervousness, his impatience, were constantly becoming more intense. At every unexpected noise, no matter how slight or how commonplace, at every footstep in the hall, at every clatter of dishes in the kitchen, at every gust of wind upon the window-pane, he started and caught his breath. He felt his heart alternately growing hot and cold. Now it would leap with joy, at the thought of what was so near at hand ; now it would cease beating, in spasmodic terror of some unknown calamity. It began to gallop tempestuously, when at last Elias heard the carriage rattle up, and stop before the house. "Oh," he told himself, "it's only the way any man in my place would feel. One doesn't get married every day in the week." His cheeks burned. His mouth was dry and feverish. His hands gave off a cold perspiration, and they shook like those of an old man.

The rabbi entered the carriage. Elias, having instructed the coachman where to drive, followed. The carriage moved off.

"At a church?" questioned the rabbi.

"No ; at their house," replied Elias.

"A large affair? Many guests?"

"Very few. Perhaps twenty-five or thirty. Their friends."

"That's good. It would be a pity to have a crowd."

After which both held their peace. Elias leaned back in his seat, and looked out of the window.

Now, not only his hands, but all his limbs, were trembling, quaking, as if he had the ague. He gritted his teeth firmly together to keep them from chattering. In his breast he was conscious of a vague, palpitating pain, very like extreme fear. He tried hard, but vainly, to exercise his will and his intelligence. In his brain all was bewilderment and confusion. Mechanically, he repeated to himself, "It is as every man in my place would feel." But he did not believe it. His condition mystified him completely. He was suffering miserably. One thought alone rode clear above the mental hurricane : "Thank God, it will soon be over." Meanwhile, in a dull, sick way, he was looking out of the window, and observing the progress of the carriage. Onward, onward, they were jolting, through the wet streets, where the sidewalks, like inky mirrors, gave back distorted images of the street lamps ; past blazing shop-fronts, past jingling horse-cars, past solitary foot-passengers ; ever nearer and nearer to their destination ; and that sinking in his breast, and that uproar in his brain, ever growing more marked, more painful, more perplexing. A happy bridegroom driving to his wedding ! More like a doomed criminal driving to the place of expiation. Presently they reached the great circle at the junction of Fifty-ninth Street and Eighth Avenue. Elias drew a long, deep breath, clenched his fists, straightened up, by a huge effort mustered a little self-possession, and announced faintly, " Well,

we're almost there." To his bewildered senses, his own voice sounded unfamiliar and far away.

A few seconds of acute suspense, and the carriage came to a stand-still in front of Redwood's door.

"Well," began the rabbi, as Elias made no movement, "is this the house?"

"Yes."

"Well, sha'n't we get out?"

"Yes, of course. But first, let me tell you. You go right into the parlor—at the left as we enter. I'll go straight up-stairs. For God's sake, remember your promise. Don't—don't make any disturbance here."

They got out of the carriage, and climbed the stoop, over which an awning had been erected. The door was opened by a negro, in dress-suit and white gloves. The rabbi, pursuant to Elias's request, turned at once into the parlor, where already a half-dozen early arrivals were assembled. Elias, bearing the rabbi's hat and overcoat, hurried up the staircase to the room that had been set apart for him. There, having slammed the door behind him, he flung himself into an easy-chair, took his head between his hands, closed his eyes, and strove with might and main to summon a little strength, a little composure.

"There is no more chance of its taking place, than there is of the sun's failing to rise to-morrow morning"—that phrase had begun again to ring hideously in his ears.

Pretty soon he became aware that he was no longer alone. Somebody had entered the room, and was speaking to him. He looked up. Dazed and dizzy, as if through a veil, he saw old Redwood standing before him.

"Did you speak? What did you say?" he asked.

"I said how-d'ye-do," answered Redwood. "You look sort of rattled. What's the matter with you?"

"Oh, nothing. I'm very well, thank you. How—where is Christine?"

"Oh, she's busy making her toilet—she and her friends. They've been at it pretty much all the afternoon. But, I say, brace up. Would you like something to drink?"

"No. Much obliged, but I—I'm all right. Only a little excited, you know."

"And, by the way, who was that old party that came in with ye—black and white?"

"Black and white?"

"Yes—black hair, white face—black tie, white collar—looks like a parson, and like an Israelite, at the same time."

"Oh, that's my uncle—Dr. Gedaza."

"You don't say so! So he's come around, has he? Relented, and got reconciled? Well, I must go down stairs, and clasp his fist."

"No; don't please. That is, I wouldn't if I were you. Better let him alone," said Elias.

"Why, man alive, why not? Mustn't I do the honors of the house?"

"Yes; but he—he's sort of eccentric. I wouldn't

pay any attention to him. It might get him started, you understand."

"Oh, well, you know him, I suppose; and if you say so, all right. But it don't seem just the thing not to bid him welcome. You'll have to excuse me, any how, now. The guests are arriving right along, and I must be on deck to receive 'em."

Old Redwood departed. Elias felt rather better—less feverish and excited, but somewhat dull and weak.

In a few minutes Redwood reappeared.

"Come," he cried. "Chris is ready—waiting for ye."

Elias's heart bounding fiercely, he rose, and followed the old man through the hall into the front room. Christine advanced to meet him, a vision of dazzling whiteness. "Oh, I'm so afraid," she whispered, as he folded her in his arms. Then, after he had released her, "Here, dear," she said, and plucked a rosebud from her bouquet, and pinned it into his button-hole. Her fingers trembled. A truant wisp of golden hair lightly brushed his cheek.

"Now, children," said old Redwood, "you understand the programme, do ye? I go in first, and stand up alongside the parson. You follow about a minute after, Christine leaning on Elias's left arm. Now the sooner you're ready the better. Shall I start?"

"Yes," they answered.

He kissed his daughter, wrung Elias's hand, and left the room.

The clergyman stood between the front parlor windows. At a distance of two or three yards, the guests formed an irregular horse-shoe. There were a few young girls in bright colors, a few young men in white waistcoats and swallow-tails. The rest were elderly folk, the women in black silks, the men in black frock-coats. A goodly quantity of cut flowers, distributed about the room, refreshed the hot, close air.

There was a low buzz of conversation—which, however, abruptly subsided, as the door opened, and old Redwood marched gravely up, and took his position at the clergyman's right hand.

The inevitable hush of expectancy. All eyes focused upon the door. Through which, next instant, entered the bridal couple, and walked slowly forward to where they were awaited.

"Dearly beloved," solemnly began the minister, "we are gathered together here in the sight of God, and in the face of this company, to join together this man and this woman in holy matrimony"—and continued to the end of his preliminary address.

After a brief pause, he proceeded: "Elias, wilt thou have this woman, Christine, to thy wedded wife, to live together after God's ordinance in the holy estate of matrimony? Wilt thou love her, comfort her, honor and keep her in sickness and in

health ; and, forsaking all others, keep thee only unto her, so long as ye both shall live ?"—and again paused, waiting for Elias to respond.

A crimson flush suffused Elias's face, then, in an instant, faded to an intense waxen pallor. A film, a glassiness, appeared to form over the pupils of his eyes. His lips parted and twisted convulsively, writhing, as if in a desperate struggle to shape the expected words. Suddenly he threw his arm up into the air ; a stifled, broken groan burst from his throat ; he fell backward, head foremost, full length upon the floor, and lay there rigid, lifeless.

For a moment a breathless, startled stillness among the people. Then a quick outbreak of voices, and an eager pressing forward toward the spot where Elias had fallen.

Christine for a breathing-space remained motionless, aghast. All at once, " Oh, my God ! He is dead—*dead* ! " she cried, an agonized, heart-piercing cry, and sank upon her knees beside him, and flung herself sobbing upon his breast.

Parrot-like, the guests caught up her cry, and repeated it in low, awed tones among themselves :

" He is dead. He has dropped down dead."

The poor minister looked very badly scared, and as though he felt it incumbent upon him to say or to do something, without knowing what.

At first old Redwood himself had started back, completely staggered. But he very speedily recovered his presence of mind.

" Oh, no, he ain't dead either," he called out.

"He's got a fit or something. Hey, Dr. Whipple, down there! Come up here—will ye?—and see what ye can do."

The person thus appealed to, a tall old gentleman, with iron-gray hair, had gradually been elbowing his way to the front; and before Redwood had fairly spoken his last word, was bending over Elias, and gazing curiously at his face.

Close upon the doctor's heels came the rabbi. The rabbi's countenance wore a strangely inappropriate smile—one would have said, a smile of satisfaction.

"Well, doctor?" questioned Redwood.

"Oh, doctor, doctor," cried Christine, looking up through her tears, "is—is he—?"

"No, no, my child," answered the doctor, kindly. "He'll be as well as ever in an hour or two—only a bit head-achey and shaken up. There's no occasion for any alarm at all." Turning to Redwood: "It's epilepsy. Does he have these attacks often?"

"I'm blamed if I knew he had them at all," said Redwood. "How is it about that?" he asked, addressing the rabbi.

"He has never been troubled this way before," the rabbi replied.

"Perhaps it's in his family?" questioned the doctor.

"Perhaps. I don't know," the rabbi answered, though he did know perfectly well that Elias's father had died in an epileptic fit; a fact, by the way, of which Elias himself was ignorant.

"Brought on, then, by nervous excitement, worry, loss of sleep, or what not, I suppose. It will be interesting to note whether he ever has another," the medical man concluded.

Christine, upon receiving the doctor's assurance that her lover was in no danger of death, had begun anew to sob upon his breast, more violently, if possible, than at first.

The clergyman had retired to the back parlor, and was discoursing of the mishap to a bevy of gaping guests.

"He turned as red, madam, as red as a beet," the clergyman declared, "and then as white—as white as your handkerchief, and frothed at the mouth. I never saw a person turn so white—positively livid. Conceive my feelings. I was really very much pained, and very apprehensive. I thought certainly that it was heart-disease, and that he was about to breathe his last. I can't tell you how distressing it is, to have such a thing occur in the midst of such a joyful occasion. It has given my nerves a most serious shock."

His auditors murmured sympathetically.

"Well, doctor, what's to be done? Can you fetch him around?" Redwood asked.

"Oh," the doctor said, "he'll come around naturally in a little while—an hour or two, at the furthest. I think that we had better carry him to another room, where it will be quieter and cooler and away from the people."

"No," put in the rabbi; "if you will help me get him into the carriage, I'll take him home."

"Why," exclaimed Redwood, "if you do that we'll have to postpone the wedding."

"Yes, I shouldn't wonder," concurred the rabbi.

"But then—there'll be the very deuce to pay. Here are these guests assembled, and supper prepared, and their passage engaged on to-morrow's steamer, and their trunks gone aboard, by George, and every thing in apple-pie order; and take it all around, you couldn't make a more awkward proposition."

"Add to which," interposed the medical man, "that in his present condition, a carriage-drive, and the jolting up which it would involve, are just the things that might do him the most injury."

"I'm sorry," the rabbi said; "but being his only relative here, I feel myself responsible for him, and must act as my own judgment directs. I shall thank you, therefore, if you will assist me in carrying him to our carriage."

"I'll be hanged," cried Redwood, "if I think it's decent for you to step in here, and knock all our plans into a cocked hat, like that. And, any how, didn't you hear the doctor say that a carriage drive would hurt him?"

"And yet," volunteered the doctor, "if the gentleman insists, Mr. Redwood, it will be wiser to let him have his own way. A dispute, you know, under the circumstances, is hardly desirable."

"I do insist. I feel in duty bound to," said the rabbi.

"Well, you've got a mighty queer sense of duty, then," retorted Redwood; "and you can bet your life that when Elias comes to, he'll be as mad as jingo. But if you choose to take the responsibility on your own shoulders, go ahead."

When Christine saw that they were about to bear Elias from the room, she demanded eagerly, almost fiercely, whither? And upon being informed that the rabbi meant to carry him home, she passionately besought the old man not to do it; imploring him to let her sweetheart remain where he was, at least till he should have regained his senses; and pleading that until then she could not help fearing the worst.

"Oh, sir—please—*please* don't take him away from me. How shall I rest, until he has come to, and spoken to me? Oh, I can't—I can't *bear* to have you take him away, like that. If you would only leave him till he can speak to me! What shall I do, all night long, not knowing whether he is sick—or dead—or what, and—and always seeing him before me, that way? Oh, there, there! They are taking him away. Oh, Elias! Oh, sir! Oh, God, God! Oh, what shall I do?"

She might as well have addressed her entreaties to a stone. Neither by gesture, nor by word of mouth, nor by variation of feature, did the rabbi signify that he had even heard her voice, or was even aware of her existence. The carriage

drove away, leaving Christine in a paroxysm of frantic grief.

"Well," remarked old Redwood to Dr. Whipple, "I've heard tell of bowels of mercy ; but actually, that old Hebrew there, he must have bowels of brass."

XIII.

SLOWLY recovering his senses, the first thing that Elias became conscious of, was a racking headache. By and by he opened his eyes, and glanced around. Vaguely, as if half waking, half dreaming, he saw that he was lying fully dressed upon his own bed in his own bed-chamber. The gas was turned down low. By fits and starts a puff of fresh, cool air blew through the open window, making the curtain flap noisily, and the gas-flame flicker. Nobody else was in the room. Pretty soon he closed his eyes again, and again for a while was aware only of that desperate pain in the head.

But by degrees a certain sluggish perplexity began to assert itself, a certain dull surprise and curiosity.

"There is something strange—something I don't understand. How do I come to be here? Have I been asleep and dreaming? Or is it true that a little while ago I was somewhere else? Where? I was doing something—something important—

something that somebody else was doing with me. What? And then something happened. And—and now, here I am, lying here as though I had just waked out of a sleep, but all dressed, and with such, with *such* a headache— Let me think.”

He tried hard to think; but in his mind all was impenetrable darkness, through which his thought groped at random, catching no gleam to follow; until of a sudden, a swift, intense lightning-flash of memory; and in an instant of supreme horror—with a mental recoil that communicated itself to his body, and made it start convulsively—he beheld what he supposed to be the appalling truth. Upon that lightning-flash, succeeded a very thunder-storm confusion in his brain.

“Oh, God!” he cried; and again and again, “Oh, God!”

Just what was it that he remembered?

“I remembered,” says he, in another part of that letter from which an excerpt was printed in Chapter X., “I remembered every thing down to the moment of my falling, with unaccustomed vividness and detail. I remembered our entering the parlor—you trembling upon my arm!—and running the gauntlet of the guests, and coming to a stand-still before the clergyman. I remembered the address that he had made; and how you had listened, with downcast eyes and blushing cheeks; and how I had—well, scarcely listened—but waited till he should finish, with eyes fastened upon your face, and heart beating hard for happiness.

I remembered his asking, 'Wilt thou take this woman, Christine, to thy wedded wife?' and the glow of joy and pride and triumph, with which I prepared to answer. I remembered that then, just as I was opening my lips to speak, it seemed as though suddenly a dazzling disk of light rose before my eyes, changing color in rapid pulsations from white through yellow to scarlet; a sudden, tingling pain, like a powerful electric current, starting in the back of my head, shot through my body; a hard, sharp lump stuck in my throat; I felt that I was losing my ability to stand upright. I tried with might and main to keep my feet, and to speak the two necessary words. But I could not. My limbs contracted spasmodically. I heard a sharp explosion, like the report of a pistol, which sounded and felt as though somehow it came from within my own head. I cried out. I believed that I was surely dying. There was a second of immense agony—fear of death. I fell. Up to that point, I remembered every thing perfectly. But *at* that point, my memory broke short off."

And remembering these things in this way, what did he conclude? He jumped to a conclusion which was most unwarrantable and most deplorable, but which, considering all the circumstances, considering the fact that he was a Jew, born a Jew, bred a Jew, and the fact that for countless generations his ancestors upon every side had been Jews of the Jews, can scarcely be regarded as unnatural. He concluded that what the rabbi had prophesied

had come to pass. He concluded that the God of Israel had indeed interfered.

The wild, black chaos, into which this conclusion hurled all his faculties, all his ideas, all his emotions, who shall describe? Was it not unspeakable even to himself? With horror-struck soul, the horror quivering through every atom and fiber of his being, he could only lie there upon his bed, shuddering, and moaning out, "Oh, God! oh, God! oh, God!"

In wonder-tales and mystical romances, we are accustomed to see the supernatural dealt with composedly enough. Surprise, amazement even, it may inspire in the fictitious personages confronted by it. But when, outside of literature, in what we call real life, a man of ordinary sensitiveness persuades himself that he has felt the contact of that awful, questionable Something which lies beyond the limits of common experience, his revulsion of feeling does not stop at amazement or surprise. All his theories and principles of life, tacit, unconscious perhaps, though many of them may be, are shaken from their foundations, disorganized, thrown into confusion; and his predominant sensation, we may be sure, is one of blood-curdling, panic horror. Such, at least, was the truth with Elias. His heart seemed to have frozen in his bosom; and he was sick with fear from head to foot.

Presently—how long after his recovery, he could not have told—he felt the touch of a cool hand upon his forehead, and heard the voice of his uncle

low and gentle, say, "Elias, my poor boy, are you suffering? Are you in pain?"

He looked up into his uncle's face.

"Oh, thank God!" he cried. "Thank God, that you have come! Stay with me. Turn up the gas. I want light—plenty of light. Turn it up full head. There—that's right. Now, sit down—here—near me. Don't leave me alone. For God's sake, don't leave me alone. Oh, it is good, so good, to have somebody with me. It was horrible to be all alone."

The rabbi drew a chair up to Elias's bedside, and seated himself there.

"If you could go to sleep, Elias," he said, "it would be the best thing for you."

"If I could go to sleep!" Elias laughed a harsh, unmirthful laugh. "If I could go to sleep! That's good!" Then, loudly, passionately: "How shall I ever go to sleep again? Are you crazy, to talk to me of sleep! Don't you know what has happened? Oh, my God, my God! And he talks to me of sleep! *Sleep!* Man alive, how—how shall I ever do any thing in all my life again, but—but—*Oh!*" His voice broke into an inarticulate groan. He had started up, leaning on his elbow. Now he fell back flat.

"You are very much excited," said the rabbi. "You must try to calm yourself. Is the pain very great?"

"Oh, the pain—the pain is nothing. I have a headache, yes. But that is nothing. I wish it was

ten times worse. I *like* the pain. If it were worse, then I might—I might forget the fearful, awful—oh, I can't express it. Put yourself in my place. If it had happened to you, how do you think you would feel? Oh, it's very easy for you to sit there comfortably, and talk to me about going to sleep."

"If it had happened to me, Elias, I should rejoice in it," the rabbi answered; and then, as Elias made no retort, went quietly, gravely, on: "Instead of agitating and terrifying you, Elias, the knowledge that you have gained of how close the relations are between the Lord our God and His chosen people, ought to inspire you with a deep, serene joy, with a feeling of infinite gratitude, and of perfect confidence. It should rejoice you, to know that the Lord is your constant, steadfast companion, that He follows your every footstep with the personal solicitude of a father. Awful, yes; but grand, beautiful, inspiring, and of unspeakable comfort amid the trials and perils of the world. Think, Elias, and try to appreciate, how great the Lord's love for you has been shown to be—His love and His mercy. You—were you not purposing the commission of the most deadly of sins? A sin which would have pursued you with unceasing penalties to your grave, and for which not you alone, but your children, and your children's children, would have had to suffer? And in His abundant love, what did the Lord do? He suffered you to persist up to the very brink of the precipice, and to gaze down into the abyss of iniquity; but before

you had taken the final, fatal step, and fallen, lo ! He stretched out His arm ; He saved you from destruction ; and, like a forgiving parent, He brought you back to His bosom. Isn't what I say true, Elias ? ”

The rabbi paused ; but Elias remained silent.

“ Answer me, Elias. Isn't it true ? ”

“ Oh, I suppose it's true. Yes, yes, I suppose it's true. But what difference does that make ? You—you may analyze it as much as you choose. I don't deny what you say. I don't care about that. But if you had been through it—if you had been through it— Good God ! You make me mad, sitting there, and talking philosophy to me.”

“ Not philosophy—don't say philosophy—say religion. It has upset you, because, in spite of my warning, you did not expect it, and because you haven't thought about it sufficiently. You haven't pierced to the innermost substance of it, and thoroughly understood it. Reflect upon it, in the light of what I have said. Reflect that it has simply exemplified to you the closeness, the carefulness, with which the Lord our God looks to your welfare. As you walk among the pitfalls of life, He holds your hand, and sustains you. He will allow no evil to beset you. How safe you ought to feel ! What courage you ought to take ! ”

Elias pondered the rabbi's speech in silence. To the best of his comprehension, deranged as it was by his terror, debauched by his superstition, its truth seemed indisputable.

"And now," the rabbi continued, after a brief pause, "it is apparent that the Lord has been your guide from the beginning. You were becoming indifferent—without knowing it, perhaps—indifferent to your religion. You had not zeal enough. You dwelt in a Christian community; and the Christian atmosphere was infecting you, was corrupting you. You were, so to speak, drifting away. The Lord saw it. He wished to call you back. He wished to awaken your slumbering soul, to revive your flagging Judaism, to rekindle your ardor, which had burned down to a tiny spark. Well, in His wisdom, this was the means that He devised. He caused you to fancy yourself attached to a Christian woman. He allowed you to harden yourself to the thought of committing the extreme sin—to the thought of marrying her. Then, at the last moment, He manifested Himself. He rescued you from your danger. And thus He gave such new vitality to your faith, that there is now no possibility of its ever becoming faint again. Oh, have you not reason in this to praise the Lord, and to thank Him, from the depths of your spirit? Oh, my son, son of my sister, how signally He has blessed you!"

"It is true," Elias answered, "the Lord has shown me great mercy—greater than I deserved. I shall never doubt again. I shall always be a good Jew after this."

"And as for the—the *love* you talked about—"

"Oh, don't speak of it. It is dead, quite dead."

The Lord has struck it dead in my heart. It is as though it had never been—as though I had never seen her, or known her.”

“I was sure it would be.”

“The Lord has burned it out of my heart.”

“He has breathed upon your heart and purified it. I am glad you recognize it. I am glad, too, that you seem calmer now, and more like yourself again.”

“Yes, I am more like myself. I see that I had no reason for getting so wrought up. But—oh, it was frightful.” Elias shuddered. In a minute he asked, “Can you forgive me?”

“Forgive you? For what?”

“You know—the way I acted.”

“It isn’t a question of forgiveness. You didn’t understand. I could not have expected you to act otherwise.”

“You are very generous. I was, as you say, ignorant. I acted like a brute.”

“You acted according to your light—which was dim. I understood. The Lord gave me to understand. When you first came into my study last night, and told me what you meant to do, the Lord gave me to understand. He assured me that it would all come out well in the end—that the marriage would never take place. That is why I spoke as I did. I felt perfectly sure. I did not fear for an instant. But now, Elias, we must stop talking. You must go to bed, and sleep.”

“I don’t believe I shall be able to sleep to-night.”

"Yes, you will ; for I am going to give you a sleeping potion."

The potion had a speedy effect. Elias buried his face in the pillow, and was soon sound asleep.

"That obstreperous old man who was to have been your father-in-law, has called twice," said the rabbi ; "and he is coming again at five o'clock."

It was in the afternoon of the following day. Elias had just waked up. The rabbi was seated upon the foot of Elias's bed.

"What did he want ?" Elias asked.

"Oh, he called to inquire about you—about how you were feeling."

"And you told him ?"

"That you were asleep."

"Is that all ?"

"What else ?"

"I didn't know but you might have told him of my—my change of heart."

"No. I thought it better that he should hear of that from your own lips."

"Why ?"

"Several reasons. Chiefly, because then he can have no doubt about it. You can make him understand that it is assured and irrevocable. If I were to speak with him he might doubt my word, or suspect that I had been influencing you. He seems to be something of a fire-eater."

"Well, I dare say you are right. But it will be very hard."

"It will, undoubtedly. But there's no help for it. It's an unavoidable nuisance. Once over and done with it, you'll feel immensely relieved."

"It is strange," said Elias, "how completely my affection for her seems to have been destroyed. Here, a little while ago, it was, and for many months had been, the ruling passion, the single aim and purpose of my life. I thought of nothing else, felt nothing else, cared for nothing else, all day long, every day. And now, it seems to have been utterly wiped out and obliterated, without even leaving a trace behind it—just as you blow out a candle, and the flame vanishes. I can think of her without any emotion of any kind. If I had never known her, if she had never been more than a passing acquaintance, my indifference could not be greater. This is very strange, isn't it?"

"No, Elias, not strange at all. You must remember that it is the act of the Lord. As you said this morning, the Lord has struck your passion dead in your heart. He has purified your heart with fire, and restored to it the cleanliness it had before this woman crossed your path, and tempted you. The truth is, you never really *loved* her at all. She exerted a certain baleful fascination over you—a fascination which the breath of the Lord has dissipated, just as the breath of the morning dissipates the miasms that have gathered over night."

"I suppose—I suppose it will be a heavy blow for her. She loves me. She will suffer terribly."

"Oh, you mustn't think of that. That isn't your affair. The Lord has used her as His instrument. Now that her usefulness has ceased, the Lord will dispose of her as He deems wisest."

"But she will suffer, all the same. And here is what is strangest. It stands to reason—it is obvious—and I know perfectly well—that she will suffer. And yet, I seem to feel no pity, no sorrow, no sympathy, for her—not any more than as though my heart were a stone. My whole capacity for feeling seems to have been destroyed. Perhaps it is so. Perhaps it has been. Perhaps the Lord—I don't know how to say just what I mean; but it seems as though I had grown indifferent to every thing."

"In the main, that is the result of the shock you have sustained. It will pass. But as for her, the Lord will not allow you to feel for her. You have suffered enough. Her turn has come. If you have no sympathy for her, it is because she is entitled to none. The Lord desires that she shall receive none. She is a Christian, a Goy, despised and abominated of the Lord. She has served her purpose. Now she must bear her punishment."

"And yet—"

"No, no, boy. Don't think about it. Don't let your mind dwell upon it. You must not think of any thing but of how grateful you ought to be for your own escape. Put all your mind and heart into thanksgiving. Praise the Lord! It is irreverent for you to question, to lament, the conse-

quences which the Most High, in His wisdom, has ordained."

After an interim of silence, Elias said, "There is something in this connection which, I think, I ought to tell you. Night before last, up in my studio—" And he went on to give the rabbi an account of the curious experience he had had with his mother's portrait. "I thought at the time," he concluded, "that it was simply a morbid illusion of my senses. But now I am not so sure. What do you say? What is your explanation?"

"I do not believe that the souls or spirits of the dead are ever permitted to manifest themselves to the living," replied the rabbi; "and therefore I do not for an instant entertain the theory that it could have been a genuine apparition of your mother. But neither do I believe that it was a mere trick of your senses. I believe that the Lord, as a warning to you, caused you to see what you saw—caused an image of your mother's face to rise before you. I am not surprised. I have known of His causing similar things to happen before."

"It is wonderful, it is incomprehensible," said Elias, "why the Lord should take such an intimate interest in the welfare of a mere individual, like me."

"You are a Jew. There is not a faithful Jew living, but is kept constantly in the Lord's eye, in the Lord's mind. The longer you live, the more perfectly will you realize the ineffable privilege you have enjoyed in being born a Jew."

At about five o'clock, surely enough, old Redwood called. The maid ushered him into the rabbi's study, where Elias and his uncle awaited him. He halted just within the threshold, and made a stiff bow to the rabbi. Then he advanced upon Elias, with extended hand, exclaiming, "Well, Elias, I'm glad to see you. How are you? How do you do?"

Elias took his hand, held it for an instant, dropped it, and responded, "How do you do?"

"That ain't answering my question," said Redwood. "I want to know, how *do* ye do?"

"Oh, I feel quite well, quite as usual, thank you," replied Elias. "Won't—won't you sit down?"

"Well, I guess I will—yes," the old man assented, and did so. "Well," he continued, "this has been the devil's own business all around, hasn't it? Poor Chris, poor little Chris—she's pretty near out of her head. She's all broke up. She is, for a fact. She wanted to come down here with me—begged and implored me to let her. But I wouldn't. I didn't know how you might be; and, think s's I, it might just fret her worse than ever. She's been scared about to death. Poor little thing! I tried to comfort her, and cheer her up; but it wa'n't much use. A father don't count for much, now-a-days, when a young man is concerned. I suppose," he wound up abruptly, "seeing you feel all right again, you'll be up to the house to-night, hey? Then we can settle on a new day for the wedding."

Elias summoned his utmost courage. "N-no ; I think not," he said. His voice was husky and unsteady.

Redwood did not understand. "Hey—what ?" he queried.

"I say, no ; I think I shall not call this evening."

"No ? Why, why not ? Don't you—ain't you well enough ? Chris is just—I may say, she's just pining for a sight of ye. I really think she'll get sick, if this thing keeps on. If you're able to leave the house, I really think you'd better come up. She—she's nearly cried her eyes out. I told her—just before I left—I told her : 'Now, look here, Chris, you want to stop that crying. You want to dry your eyes, and *bleach* 'em, against Elias's coming,' says I, 'for he won't admire them, red like that.' I said this, you know, to sort of make her laugh. But seriously, I'm scared about her. I am, actually. She hasn't tasted a mouthful of food all day. I guess I'll have to call in the doctor if she ain't better to-morrow. But unless you're considerably worse off than you look, I guess you'd better come up. I'll tell you what you do—you come up with me now, and take dinner."

Elias felt that the old man was making it more and more difficult for him to say what would have to be said. He clenched his fists, and gritted his teeth, and began by a great effort to force out the words.

"Mr. Redwood—there is a—a misunderstanding. I must set it right. I—I am exceedingly

sorry—to—to be compelled to tell you—to tell you that—” Here his voice sank to a whisper. He paused for a moment, drew a long breath, resumed aloud, “—that, owing to circumstances which I can not perfectly explain—because, in fact, of our difference of religion—she being a Christian, and I a Jew—the—the engagement—between Miss Redwood and myself—will have to be—broken off. This is quite positive. There is no help for it. Please—please believe it, without my saying more. I am very sorry. Our engagement will have to be broken off.”

He did not dare to look at the man to whom he had spoken. He looked at his uncle. But the latter was watching old Redwood.

Old Redwood's face was eloquent. When Elias had begun to speak, the old man had been smiling good-naturedly. Gradually his smile had faded to an expression of blank incomprehension ; which, in its turn, had gradually changed to one of uttermost, indignant astonishment. But now, this too had departed, and his features had become set in a new smile—a smile which revealed the abyssmal contempt, the passionate, malignant scorn, at the bottom of his soul, far more clearly than the strongest words could have done. A grayish pallor had overspread his brow. His eyes blazed upon Elias. Between his drawn lips, his teeth gleamed savagely. He sat still, nodding his head, and smiling that unpropitious smile.

For a long while, painfully long, no one spoke.

Elias, though he dared not look, knew how fiercely old Redwood was eying him—felt the heat of old Redwood's gaze. His cheeks flaming, his body in a tremor, he sat still, afraid to stir. He could hear old Redwood breathe. He could hear the boisterous beating of his own heart, in dread apprehension of the brewing storm. He could hear the regular, metallic tick-tack of the rabbi's clock, which increased the stress, as it measured the duration, of his suspense. The rabbi, also, was smiling now—a smile of genial satisfaction.

At last old Redwood moved. He shifted in his chair. He cleared his throat. With a single jerk of his tall frame, he got upon his feet. He stood for a few seconds, silent. Presently, "Well, Elias Bacharach," he said, in low, dry tones, vibrant with suppressed fury, "I understand that I am to inform my daughter from you, that, as you have said, on account of your difference of religion, she is to consider herself jilted and thrown over. I think that is the upshot of what you have said."

"Say, rather, released from her engagement," put in the rabbi, blandly. "And if you will permit me, I shall be happy to explain to you the circumstances which render this step unavoidable."

"Pardon me," returned old Redwood, with a grand bow and flourish. "I was not aware, sir, of having addressed you. I'm talking to Mr. Elias Bacharach. And now, Elias Bacharach, this is what I've got to say. I suppose you know what you air. I suppose you know the names I could

call ye, if I had a mind to demean myself to calling names. You look in the dictionary, and you'll find them printed in black and white. But I guess you won't need to look so far. I guess it will do just as well if you look in your own conscience. You know what you've done. You know how you've taken a young, innocent girl, and won her heart, and got it set on you, so that she don't think of any thing or any body else ; and then flung her overboard, and spoiled her life, and darkened her whole youth. And you know what honest people think of a man who's done that. That's all. You needn't be afraid. You needn't sit there, shaking. I ain't going to hurt you. I ain't going to touch you, even. I'll go home now. I'll go home, and tell the news to Christine. If it kills her, you know who'll have to answer for her death." Thus far, the old man had spoken with great self-control ; but here, suddenly, he forgot himself.—"But, by God," he thundered out, "if it does kill her, I—I'd rather *have* it, by God ! than have her married to you, now that I know what you are, you damn, miserable, white-livered Jew ! "

With which, he stalked from the room ; and next moment the street-door slammed behind him.

"Well, now, Elias," said the rabbi, "now it's all over for good and all."

"Yes, I dare say," replied Elias ; "but I feel somehow as though it had just begun—as though the worst of it were still to come."

"Oh, nonsense !" cried the rabbi. "You're mor-

bid. Cheer up. Let's celebrate your deliverance with a bottle of wine."

XIV.

APPARENTLY it did not once occur to Elias to seek a natural explanation for what had happened ; and even if it had done so, I don't believe it would have made much difference. But this, as has been said, in view of all the circumstances, was scarcely strange. The supernatural explanation had, so to speak, captured his mind by storm. With tremendous force and suddenness, it had thrust itself upon him at a moment when he was suffering the exhaustion and the debility consequent upon a violent shock ; and, once in possession, it clung tenaciously, and left no foothold for a saner judgment to stand upon. Then, besides, had not the rabbi's menaces predisposed him to accept it ? And finally, there were heredity and education and mental habitude, which in such matters must surely count for much. Elias had been fancying that his inherited and sedulously cultivated superstition was dead and buried. Love, like a radiant St. George, had slain the monster. To us, wise after the fact, it is conceivable that it had but slumbered ; and now again was wide awake, breathing fire and vengeance ; and had given its quondam executioner such a blow as might not speedily be recovered from, if at all.

Elias, at any rate, did not doubt. He told himself that he had been on the point of committing a mortal sin, one that would have removed him forever beyond the pale of divine mercy, one that would have entailed upon him, and upon his seed after him, infinite retribution. He told himself that at the eleventh hour heaven had intervened, and saved him from his own suicidal clutch. He shuddered at the notion of the risk he had run. He was duly grateful for his deliverance. It had at first surprised him to find that his love of Christine had not survived. That which had absorbed his life, and shaped and directed his life, and been to his life what the sunlight is to the day, its vital, dominating, distinguishing principle, had vanished utterly out of his life, had melted phantom-like, and left not a shred, not a mark, not even a gap, behind, to show where, or of what substance, or of what form it had been. It was the extinguishment of a subtle, spiritual flame, which departs, so far as is determinable, nowhither—is simply swallowed up and assimilated by the inane. Three days ago, he had believed it possessed of everlasting vigor; and now, it was gone as completely as the snows of yesteryear. Death and dissolution had occurred simultaneously.—But his surprise was short-lived. On reflection, he agreed with the rabbi, that nothing else could have been expected. He adopted the rabbi's metaphor, and said that the breath of the Lord had entered his heart, and cleansed it. He remembered how, once before, something similar

had befallen, in answer to prayer. But the effects of that had been transitory. The effects of this, he thought, would be permanent. If there were the materials for melancholy here, Elias was callous to their influence.

It seemed, indeed, that not only had his love been abolished, but that his entire emotional system had sunken into a state of apathy, and become unresponsive and inactive. He knew, for example, perfectly well how Christine would suffer. The light of her youth would be quenched, and its sweetness turned to gall and wormwood. The world, that was so fair in her sight, would crumble suddenly to a wide waste of dust and ashes. An agony like fire would be kindled in her young heart, hopeless even of hope. It might perhaps, as old Redwood had said, it might perhaps kill her. But if it did not kill her, it would do worse. She would have to live, and bear it. He knew all this. He could not help knowing it. It was too big, palpable, conspicuous, to be ignored. He knew it; and he stated it clearly, completely, circumstantially, to himself. And then he wondered at his stolidity; for it woke not a throe either of compunction or of compassion. He said to himself, "Altogether aside from the personal element, from the fact that she is who she is, and that I have been her lover; altogether aside, also, from the fact that I, though helpless and irresponsible, am still the occasion of her unhappiness; and simply because she is a woman, a human being, the knowledge of her over-

whelming sorrow and utter desolation, ought to move me to deepest, keenest pity." But it did not. It did not move him to a single momentary qualm. His condition puzzled and mystified him. He could imagine no way to account for it, unless by again following the logic of the rabbi, and assuming it to be the act of God. That it was merely the torpor, the numbness, naturally resulting from the fright, and the immense physical and moral shock, he had sustained, does not appear to have suggested itself to him.

On the morning after his interview with old Redwood (on the morning, namely, of the fourth of May, 1883 ; date worth remembering), Elias was established at his studio-window, watching the play of sunlight and shadow upon the foliage opposite in the park, and introspecting somewhat listlessly in the direction above set forth, when there came a light tap upon his door ; and, without turning around, he called out, "Come in." He heard the door creak open. He heard the visitor take two or three steps forward into the room. Then, before he had looked to see who it was, he heard his own name pronounced shyly, by a voice that was but too well-known:

"Elias !"

Unspeakably astounded and discomfited, he sprang to his feet, faced her, and stood dumb.

At the moment he was not conscious of noticing especially her appearance ; but long afterward he recalled it vividly. Long afterward, the pale face,

the disordered golden hair, the large, dark, tearful eyes, the appealing attitude—hands stretched out toward him, face upturned—became of all his memories the strongest, the clearest, the most constant, the one on which his remorse chiefly fed.

But now, he faced her and stood dumb, aware only of hubbub in his brain, and dismay in his breast.

She, manifestly unprepared for this style of greeting, started back. Her eyes filled with fear.

“Oh Elias,” she faltered, “you—you make me think that it is true.”

He, finding his voice, cried piteously : “Oh, why—why did you come here?”

And then they were both silent.

At last she began : “I came—because I could not believe—because my father told me something which I knew was a lie. I came to have you tell me that it was a lie. Oh, why did he tell me such a cruel thing? Why—why do you act like this?”

She paused, expecting him to speak. But he did not speak.

All at once she went on passionately : “Oh, you don’t know what he told me. He must have wanted to kill me. But I knew it was a lie. I told him it was a lie—oh, such a shameful, cruel lie. Oh, God ! Here, this was it : he told me—he told me that you—Elias—oh, no, no, no ! I can not say it. But yes, yes—I *will* say it—I *must* say it. He

said that you—you did not love me any more. Oh, my God, my God ! ”

She had moved up toward him. Now she fell upon his breast, and sobbed her heart out.

He passively allowed her to remain there. What to do ? what to say ? he asked himself, distracted.

“ Oh, Elias—my darling—I—I knew it could not be true,” she was murmuring between her sobs.

Thus, until her grief had spent itself—until she had had her cry out. By and by she raised her eyes to his, and smiling a forlorn little smile, asked timidly, “ You think I am very silly ? ”

But her smile did not last long. Suddenly, it changed to an expression of utmost woe and terror. She fell back a step or two.

“ Elias ! ” she cried, in a sharp, startled voice. “ Why do you look at me like that ? Is—do—you can’t—mean—that it is true ! ”

He felt that he must speak. He must gather his forces, and make her understand. He was trying to. He was trying to find the words he needed. But before they had come to him, the door opened, and the rabbi glided upon the scene.

The rabbi took in the situation at a glance.

“ Elias,” he said, “ this is unfortunate. You ought to have called me.”

Turning to Christine : “ You have forgotten yourself, madam. By what right are you here ? Did your father send you ? I shall be happy to show you the way down stairs.”

He bowed in the direction of the door.

She looked helplessly from the rabbi to his nephew; but she found little to reassure her in Elias's face.

"Was there any thing you had to say to this young lady, before she goes, Elias?" the rabbi queried, in a brisk, business-like tone.

"No, nothing," Elias began faintly, "nothing, except—yes, except—" He broke off, and drew a sharp, loud breath; suddenly he began anew: "Christine, I am powerless. The Lord—it is the Lord's will. I—it—what your father told you—it was the truth."

The words found their own way out, mechanically. He could scarcely realize that he had spoken.

For an instant she stood motionless. Then she reeled and tottered, as if about to fall. Then she recovered herself. Slowly, with a dazed, stunned air, groping blindly, she turned, and reached the door, and crossed the threshold.

The rabbi followed, shutting the door behind him.

Elias dropped into a chair. Bewildered, agitated, fagged-out, undone—he felt all this. But he felt not a pang for her.

"If I had thrown you down and trampled upon you," he wrote, a little less than two years afterward, "it would not have been so brutal, so cruel; but if I had done it in my sleep, I could not have been more insensible to your pain."

XV.

ONE evening at dinner, about a fortnight later, "What's the matter, Elias?" the rabbi asked. "You're not feeling sick, are you? Or blue? Or worried about any thing?"

"Why, no," Elias answered, "I feel all right. Why do you ask?"

"Oh, I don't know. I thought you were looking a little out-of-sorts. Likely enough, it was only an idea."

"The truth is," Elias presently volunteered, "that, so far from feeling blue or low-spirited or any thing of that kind, I don't seem to feel much of any thing at all. I'm sort of sluggish—dull—dead-and-alive. I'd give a good deal for a sensation, an excitement. I've been feeling this way pretty much all the time since—for the last two weeks. Heavy, thick, as though my blood had stopped circulating. I wish you'd stick a pin into me."

"Oh, you need a little amusement, a little fun, something to take you out of yourself. That's all. Why don't you go to the theater?"

"No, thanks. I'm not fond of the theater. Besides, it's too hot."

"Well, then, why don't you make a call?"

"A call! Pshaw; is that your notion of excitement?"

"Well, it's better than sitting at home, and moping, isn't it?"

"And, any how, whom do I know to call on?"

"Whom do you know? Mercy upon me! I could name fifty people, whom you not only know, but to whom you actually owe calls. It's really abominable, the way you neglect, and always have neglected, your social duties. There's no excuse for it. If—if you were an old recluse like me, it would be different."

"I don't see how. What if you were a young recluse, like me?"

"Ah, but nobody has a right to be a young recluse. It is only when we get along in years, that we are entitled to withdraw from the world. Besides, it's narrowing, it's hardening. You need contact with other people, to broaden your mind, and keep your sympathies alive. If you avoid society while you're young, the milk of human kindness will dry up in your bosom. You'll get cold-blooded, selfish, indifferent." Which amiable sentiments, falling from the lips of the rabbi, possessed a peculiar interest. "Come," he added, "run up-stairs, and put on your best suit, and go make a call."

"Again I ask, whom on?"

"On—on anybody. I'll tell you whom. Call on Mr. and Mrs. Koch."

The pronunciation of this name has been anglicized into *Coach*.

"Which Koch? A. Hamilton?"

"No, of course not. Washington I."

"Oh, heavens! I haven't called on them these

two years. I'd be afraid to show my face inside their door. They'd overwhelm me with reproaches."

"Well, what of that? You could stand it, I guess. They're very nice people, the Kochs; people whom it is worth while to be on good terms with—so warm-hearted and unpretentious, and yet with their hundreds of thousands behind them. There isn't a smarter business man in New York city than Washington I. Koch, nor a more honest, nor a more open-handed. Look at that stained glass window he gave the congregation. And then, at the same time, he's a man of ideas, a well-informed man; and best of all, he's a pious Jew."

"Well, I'll tell you what I'll do," said Elias; "I'll call on them, if you'll come along."

"I! Nonsense! I called on them last New-Year's, and shall call again next. That's the most that can be expected of me."

"Well, I shouldn't dare to go alone. If you'd come along, to keep me in countenance, I'd go. But alone—no, never."

There was an interval of silence. Suddenly the rabbi said, "Well, I declare, I'll do it. I'll do it, just to encourage you. There; let's go up-stairs and dress."

Pretty soon they left the house and sauntered westward arm-in-arm. Elias wore the Prince Albert coat that he had had made to be married in.

It was a hot night, and it had all the qualities characteristic of a hot night in New York. The air was redolent of bursting ailanthus buds. Strains

of music, more or less musical, were wafted from every point of the compass—from behind open windows, where people sang, or played pianos; from the blazing depths of German concert saloons, where cracked-voiced orchestrions thundered discord; from the street corners, where itinerant bands halted, and blew themselves red in the face; and from the indeterminate distance, where belated hand-organs wailed with mechanical melancholy. Third Avenue, into which thoroughfare Elias and the rabbi presently turned, was thronged by many sorts and conditions of men and women clad in light summer gear, and drifting onward in light, languid, summer fashion. It was intensely hot and oppressive; and yet, somehow, it was productive of a certain unmistakable exhilaration. The sense one got of busy, teeming human life, was penetrating and enlivening.

They walked up to Eighteenth Street, where they took the Elevated Railway. At Fifty-ninth Street they descended, and thence proceeded to Lexington Avenue. On Lexington Avenue, just above Sixty-first Street, the Kochs resided. Out on the stoops of most of the houses that they passed, the inmates were seated, resting, gossiping, trying to cool off—the ladies in white dresses, the gentlemen often in their shirt-sleeves. Here and there, some of them were partaking of refreshments; beer, sandwiches, or cheese that savored of the Rhine. Here and there, some of them had fallen asleep. Here and there, a couple of young folks made sur-

reptitious love, and, consumed by inner fires, forgot the outer heat. A pervasive odor, compounded of tobacco smoke and eau-de-cologne, assailed the nostrils. What snatches of conversation could be overheard, were either in German, or in English pronounced with a strong German accent.

They rang the Kochs' door-bell, and were ushered by a white-capped, flaxen-haired *Mädchen* into the drawing-room.

The drawing-room was gorgeously and elaborately over-furnished. A bewildering arabesque, in gold, vermillion, and purple, decorated the ceiling. A dark, pseudo-æsthetic paper, bearing huge pink apricots embossed upon a ground of olive-green, covered the walls. The gas fixtures were of brass, wrought into an intricate design, and burnished to the highest possible brilliancy. The globes were alternately of ruby and emerald tinted glass. There were a good many pictures; two or three family portraits in charcoal, and several bits of color. Of the latter, the one above the mantel-piece was the largest. A blaze of crimson and orange, deep-set in a massive gilt frame, it proved, on close inspection, to be a specimen of worsted-work; and represented, as a device embroidered upon the margin testified, the Queen of Sheba playing before Solomon. The Queen had beautiful gambooge hair, and ultramarine eyes. Her harp was of ivory, with strings of silver; her costume, décolleté, of indigo velvet, trimmed profusely with handsome gold lace. Solomon—it is to

he hoped, for his own sake, that Solomon in all his glory was not arrayed like this flamboyant effigy of himself. In a robe of gold brocade, lined with scarlet satin, and bearing upon his brow a richly bejeweled crown, that must certainly have weighed in the neighborhood of twenty pounds, the sagacious monarch looked wretchedly hot and uncomfortable. The rest of this apartment was in perfect keeping. The chairs were of ebony, upholstered in stamped red velvet.

Before long Mr. Koch came in. He wore alligator-skin slippers, and a jacket of pongee silk. Between the fingers of his left hand, he carried a half-smoked cigar. He was a short, thick-set, pale-complexioned man, of forty, or thereabouts; inclined to baldness; with clear, light-gray eyes, and a straw-colored mustache waxed in the style of the Second Empire. He looked very clean, very alert, very good-tempered, and yet as though he could become as hard and as sharp as flint, if occasion demanded. He welcomed the rabbi with warm and deferential courtesy. Then, turning to Elias, in hearty, jovial, hail-fellow-well-met manner: "Well, Mr. Bacharach, how goes it? It's a dog's age since we've seen you, and no mistake. Have a cigar?"

With one hand, he was subjecting Elias's arm to a vigorous pumping. With the other, he offered him a tortoise-shell cigar-case.

"They're genuine," he remarked. "I'll warrant them. Imported by my brother-in-law for his pri-

vate consumption. Cost you a quarter apiece straight, if you bought them in New York. *Hoyo de Montereys.*"

Elias selected one. Mr. Koch produced a silver match-box, extracted a wax match, scratched it, and held it while his guest got his cigar alight.

"Now," said he, flirting the match flame into extinction, "I'm going to ask you gentlemen to step down stairs to the basement. You'll find the whole family down there, engaged in an impressive ceremony. They're bidding good-night to the baby, whom my wife is about to put to bed."

In the basement, or dining-room (which, in the Koch establishment, pursuant to a common Jewish habit, was made to serve also as a general sitting-room), as many as seven or eight ladies and gentlemen, some seated, some standing, were gathered around the extension-table, upon which, in the approximate center of it, sprawled a fair, fat, two-year-old baby. The spectators were all smiling benevolently at him, addressing complimentary remarks to him, and exchanging complimentary notes about him among themselves. All the gentlemen were smoking.

"Lester, was you a good boy?"

"Mein Gott! He kroes bigger every day."

"Laistair, was you sleeby?"

"Just look at that smile! Ain't it perfectly grand?"

"Laistair, haif you got a kiss for grainpa, before you go to bed?"

And so forth, and so forth : all of which Master Lester acknowledged with a vague grin, and a guttural goo-goo-goo.

But at the entrance of Mr. Koch, flanked by Elias and the rabbi, the whole company deserted Lester, and making a rush forward, surrounded the visitors. The rabbi, every body greeted with subdued respect, as was due to his sacerdotal quality. But over Elias, they gushed.

Mrs. Koch, a thin, wiry little woman, with a prominent nose and a pleasant manner, piped in her shrill treble : " Oh, Meester Bacharach ! I didn't naifer expaict to haif this honor. I ain't seen you in this house for two—for three—years, already : dot time you called with your mamma."

Mrs. Koch's mother, Mrs. Blum, a dumpy, rubicund old lady, with rather a sly, rollicking air about her, held his hand, and swayed her head like an inverted pendulum from side to side, and smiled incredulously, and kept repeating, " Vail, vail, vail ! "

Then came sprightly Mr. Blum, short, corpulent, and florid, like his wife ; with a glossy bald pate, a drooping white mustache, and white mutton-chop whiskers, which left exposed a very red and shiny double chin. " My kracious ? Was dot Elias Bacharach ? Du lieber Gott ! How you haif krown, since laist time you was here ! " He held Elias off at arm's-length, and scrutinized him carefully. " Excuse me," he demanded all at once ; " where you get dot coat mait ? Washington, come over

here, and look at Elias Bacharach's coat. Dem must be Chairman goots, hey?" He plucked at the material of the unfortunate garment with his thumb and forefinger, and stroked it with the palm of his hand. "Dot's a goot coat," he declared at last. "What you pay for it?" He lifted up one of the skirts, and examined the lining. He was a veritable child of nature, this Mr. Blum; and besides, he and his son-in-law constituted the firm of Blum & Koch, manufacturers and jobbers of ready-made clothing, Franklin Street, near Broadway.

Elias and the rabbi paid their respects to the baby; after which, Mrs. Koch picked him up and carried him off.

"Mr. Bacharach," said Mr. Koch, grasping him by the elbow, "don't you know my brother-in-law, Mr. Sternberg?—Guggenheim & Sternberg, wholesale tobacco. My sister, Mrs. Sternberg; my other sister, Mrs. Morgenthau; my niece, Miss Tillie Morgenthau: Mr. Bacharach."

To each of these persons, in turn, Elias made his obeisance.

Mrs. Morgenthau was in appearance a feminine duplicate of her brother; short, thick-set, smart-looking, and with an air of having lots of go; what is called a bouncing woman.

"Delighted to make your acquaintance," she announced, in a loud, robust voice, and with emphasis, as though she wanted it understood that she wasn't fooling, but meant exactly what she said. She shook his hand, giving it a virile grip.

Miss Tillie Morgenthau was a young lady of eighteen or twenty, taller than her mother, exceedingly taper in the waist, and of an exceedingly fresh complexion ; decidedly a pretty girl, with plenty of waving black hair, a pair of bright blue eyes, a shapely red mouth, and a generous provision of tiny teeth, regular and of pearly whiteness.

"Oh, I suppose Mr. Bacharach don't remember me," she said, pouting playfully. She pronounced the personal pronoun *I*, like the interjection *Ah*.

"Oh, on the contrary," protested Elias, trying hard to remember whether he had ever seen her before.

"Now, Ah'm perfectly sure you don't," she insisted. "But Ah'll tell you. It was at the Advance Club, winter before last. Mr. Greenleaf introduced you to me—Charley Greenleaf. Do you belong to the Advance?"

No, Elias said ; he was not a member of any club.

"Well, now," called out Mr. Koch, to the company generally, "now that the baby's gone to bed, I propose that we adjourn to the summer-house, and try to get cooled off."

An exodus at once began ; and presently they were all established, a picturesque, free-and-easy group, upon the stoop. Elias found himself at Miss Tillie's side.

"Fearfully hot, isn't it?" she observed.

"Very, indeed," agreed Elias.

"It always is hot over here on Lexington Ave-

nue—Jerusalem Avenue, I call it, on account of the number of Jews that live over here. Pretty good name for it, don't you think so?"

"Quite good, yes," he assented.

"But over where we live, it's much cooler. Have a breeze there most all the time."

"Ah, where is that?"

"Beekman Place—clear down on the edge of the river. Number 57. Be happy to have you call on us there. We—mamma and I—we live with my uncle and aunt, the Sternbergs. It's fearfully out of the way, but it's grand when you get there."

"Yes, I've heard so," Elias said.

"Musical, Mr. Bacharach?" she inquired.

"Well, I don't know. I'm very fond of music."

"Sing?"

"No."

"Play?"

"No, not any more. I used to, a little. But I gave it up."

"Oh, my! What a pity! I think it's perfectly elegant for a gentleman to play, don't you? But so few of them do. I think it's simply awful."

"I suppose you play, of course?"

"Oh, I should say so. Yes, indeed. Music's my forte. I teach, too. Give lessons in Dr. Meyer's conservatory, and take private pupils."

"Won't you play for us a little to-night, then?"

"Oh, gracious, no. It's too hot. Ah'm about melted, as it is. Ain't you?"

"Well, it *is* pretty warm," Elias confessed, in a reflective tone.

At this juncture, the white-capped maid-servant began to circulate among the people, bearing a large tray, upon which reposed a pitcher, a couple of slim bottles, and half a score of cut-glass tumblers.

"Beer or wine, Mr. Bacharach?" cried Mr. Koch, from above. "Take your choice, and help yourself. They're both gratis."

Elias poured out a glass of wine for Miss Tillie, and for himself a glass of beer.

"Have a fresh cigar?" cried Mr. Koch.

"No, thank you. I haven't finished this one," returned Elias, who had allowed the fire of his cigar to go out.

"Well, if you ain't comfortable, speak up, that's all," his host concluded, and became silent.

"Oh, by the way, Meester Bacharach," piped Mrs. Koch, who, having disposed of Lester, had rejoined the company, "I hear dot we haif to con-kratulate you."

"Indeed? What about?" inquired Elias, unsuspiciously.

"We hear dot you was encaged. Was it true?"

"Oh!" he cried, taken aback. He colored up; but the darkness hid his blushes.

"Vail?" pursued his good-natured tormentress.

"No—not at all—an entire mistake," he stammered.

"Oh, dot's too baid. Ain't you naifer going to get married?"

"I don't know. I guess not," he said.

At this, there was a universal murmur of disapproval.

"Dot's just the way with all the young fellers, now-a-days," Mr. Blum exclaimed. "They don't none of them want to get married. It's simply fearful; hey, Dr. Gedaza? When me and you was young men, we'd be ashamed to be single at his age, hey? Why, a man ain't a goot Jew, if he don't get married. Might just as well be an American right out. If I was you, Elias Bacharach, I'd be afraid. The Lord will punish you. You better get married, or look out."

"Yes, that's so."

"There ain't any doubt about that."

"A young fellow ought to get married, and no mistake."

Remarks such as these went up from all directions; and poor Elias felt like the most miserable of sinners.

Tillie came to his rescue. "Oh, let Mr. Bacharach alone," she cried. "He ain't dead yet. Give him time." Then, turning to the victim, "Don't you mind them. They've got marriage on the brain.—How are you going to spend this summer? In the country?"

"Well I haven't made any plans yet," he answered; "have you?"

"Oh, yes—we're going to the Catskills—Tan-

nerstown—all of us. Ever been there? It's perfectly ideal—the grandest place I ever did see. And such a lot of nice people! I must know a hundred at the very least, who are going there this season—Advance Club people—friends of my uncle Wash. You said you didn't belong to the Advance. Why don't you join? If I were a man, wouldn't I, though! They give the most elegant balls that you can possibly imagine. Mamma and I go to all of them. Mamma took the prize at the last."

"Prize for what?" asked Elias.

"Why, don't you know? They give a prize for the most original costume; generally a book, or a work of art. Mamma's was a magnificent picture album, with hinges and clasps of hammered silver—solid, not plated. The ladies all go in costume, and each one tries to wear the most curious and surprising. Well, for instance, one lady represented a match. She had a dress just perfectly covered with burned matches, and matches in her hair, and for ear-rings, and every thing. Then, another lady, she went as a pack of cards; and her dress was just one mass of patch-work, and each patch was a card. And then mamma—Well, guess. What do you suppose mamma represented?"

"I give it up."

"Well, it was simply the grandest idea you can possibly imagine. It took the whole room by storm. Gracious me, how they did laugh and applaud! She went as a fireman."

"A—what?" gasped Elias.

"Yes, a fireman. She had a red shirt with brass buttons, and a helmet, and a badge, and a hatchet, and a big black mustache, like a regular member of the department. Well, she did look just too funny for any thing. You ought to have been there. You'd have laughed to die. I had a side-ache for a week afterward. She and the match were rivals; and there was quite a lot of betting as to who would come in first. But, as the judge who made the awards said, she did her duty, and *extinguished* the match. That was pretty good, wasn't it? She got the prize, and the match got an honorable mention."

"And your own costume?" Elias questioned. "What was that like?"

"Oh, I went in an ordinary white dress. Mamma thought I was too young to take a character. But next fall—Promise you won't tell. You mustn't breathe a word of it, will you? Next fall, I'm going as an ear of corn."

"Why," exclaimed Elias, "how can that be managed?"

"Oh, we've got it all designed; and my Uncle Wash, he's having some stuff woven on purpose, to represent the kernels. It's right in his line, you know. You wait till you see it. It will be simply the most ideal thing you can possibly imagine. But *please* don't mention it. Some one else might do it first, and get in ahead of me, if you did."

"You may rely upon me," Elias vowed. "I'll be as secret as the grave."

The rabbi now rose, and began to make his adieux. Elias followed his example.

"You two gentlemen come up here to dinner next Sunday afternoon, will you?" demanded Mr. Koch.

Before Elias had had a chance to decline, if he had been disposed to do so, the rabbi replied, "We will, with pleasure. Thank you."

On the way home, "Well," the rabbi asked, "did you have a good time?"

"Oh, fair," returned Elias. "Queer set, aren't they?"

"Well, they have certain mannerisms, yes. But you mustn't mind a superficial thing like that. They talk too loud, and their grammar isn't of the choicest; but they're thoroughly kind-hearted and well-meaning; and they're not wanting in brains, either, though they may be a trifle unpolished. Mr. Koch himself is a remarkably intelligent man, a man of ideas. You get to talking to him sometime, and you'll find out. How did you like that little Miss Morgenthau?"

"Oh, she's quite amusing. Not a bad little thing. Very raw and untamed, but good-natured enough, I dare say."

"Her father, Reuben Morgenthau, was a professional musician—one of the best pianists I ever heard; and she is said to have inherited his talent. He was lost at sea when she was a baby. Good-looking girl, isn't she? I suppose Washington I. Koch will make her a handsome settlement, when

she gets married. Yes, I suppose he'll do something very handsome, indeed."

XVI.

THE sluggishness, the dull, dead-and-alive feeling, of which Elias had complained to his uncle, seemed to be tightening its hold upon him. From morning to-night, each day, he went about in a state of profound apathy. His customary occupations had lost their power to interest him. His painting he pursued listlessly, getting no pleasure from it, and producing wretched stuff. He would sit at his studio window for hours at a stretch, moping; trying to think of something to do that would cause him a little sensation; wondering what the matter with himself could be; pitying himself from the bottom of his heart. He craved excitement as the toper craves his grog. But there were grog-shops on every corner; he knew of no excitement-shop. The entire emotional side of his nature appeared to have become congealed and unsusceptible. Even his five bodily senses had lost their edge. His food, unless he deluged it with salt and pepper, was vapid, flavorless. The cold water with which he bathed in the morning, felt lukewarm to his skin. Whatsoever his eye looked upon, straightway forfeited all its beauty, all its suggestiveness. He fancied he would enjoy a

horse-whipping. It would stir him up, and start his blood to circulating. Already his memory of Christine had begun to grow dim and shadowy, like the memory of a person known only in a dream. His whole acquaintance with her, from first to last, as he reviewed it, seemed unreal and dream-like. As a matter of curiosity, he tried now and then to call up her face and figure ; with none but the vaguest, meagerest results. She had gone quite out of his life, and was fading rapidly quite out of his thought. When Sunday came, and the rabbi reminded him of their engagement to dine at the Kochs', he experienced something almost like a distinct and positive pleasure. These people, at least, with their high-pitched voices and peculiar manners, would afford him a small measure of amusement. He hoped Miss Tillie would be there. Her aggressive crudity, which, a few weeks ago, would have cut him like a knife, would now simply have the effect of an agreeable irritant.

His hope in this respect was not disappointed. The dinner party consisted of precisely the same lot of people whom he had met the other evening, without an addition or a subtraction. When he and the rabbi arrived, they were all assembled in the parlor, forming the circumference of a circle, of which Lester, sprawling upon the carpet, and smiling a smile of beatific inanition, was the center. They were in ecstasies of admiration, which, evidently, they expected the new-comers to share. It was a monstrously fat baby, without any feat-

ures to speak of ; and it had a horrid red eruption all over one side of its face. Yet, very gravely, Mr. Koch asked, "Isn't that the handsomest baby you ever saw, Mr. Bacharach? Wouldn't you like to paint his portrait?" And Elias felt constrained to reply that it was, and that he would.

By and by his nurse came, and bore Master Lester away.

Mr. Blum sidled up, and taking Elias by the arm, remarked, "You was an artist-painter, Mr. Bacharach. Come ; I show you a work of art."

He led his victim to the worsted-work enormity above the mantel-piece.

"Hey? What you think of dot?" he inquired, with a connoisseurish smile. "I give dot to my daughter for a birthday present. Dot's immense, hey? I had it mait to order. Dot coast me a heap of money. How much you think dot coast?"

Elias had no idea. A great deal, he supposed.

"Vail, sir, dot coast me two hundred and fifty dollars, cash down. But it's worth it. I don't consider no money wasted, dot's spent for a work of art."

Suddenly a look of intense vacancy spread over Mr. Blum's countenance ; which was as suddenly followed by one of liveliest interest. Bringing his forefinger with a swoop down upon Elias's cravat-pin—a Roman coin, set in a ring of gold—"Excuse me," he demanded eagerly, "is dot a genuine aintique?"

"I don't know, I'm sure. I dare say not," Elias answered, smothering his impulse to laugh.

"Where you bought it?"

Elias told him.

"What you pay for it?"

Elias told him.

"Oh, vail, dot must be an imitation. You couldn't get no genuine aintique for a price like dot."

Pretty soon a servant appeared, and announced that dinner was ready.

"Take partners," Mr. Koch called out.

They went down to the dining-room, and distributed themselves about the table in accordance with the instructions, verbal and gestural, issued by Mrs. Koch. Elias sat between Miss Tillie and Mrs. Blum.

The men covered their heads with their handkerchiefs. There was an instant of silence. Mr. Koch glanced over at the rabbi, nodding significantly; whereupon, in his best voice, the rabbi intoned a grace. The men joined in the amen, which they pronounced omen.

The dinner began with a cocktail, and wound up with a liqueur. There were ten courses, and five kinds of wine. After the French, the Jews are the best cooks in the world; and the present repast fully sustained their reputation. The banqueters sat down at one o'clock. At a quarter to five the gentlemen lit their cigars. It was not until six o'clock that the table was finally deserted.

During the soup not a word was spoken. Everybody devoted himself religiously to his spoon. At last, however, leaning back in his chair, heaving a long-drawn sigh, and wiping the tears of enjoyment from his eyes, Mr. Blum exclaimed fervently: "Ach! Dot was a splendid soup!" And his spouse wagged her jolly old head approvingly at him, from across the table, and gurgled: "Du lieber Gott!"

This was the signal for a general loosening of tongues. A very loud and animated conversation at once broke forth from all directions. It was carried on, for the most part, in something like English; but every now and then it betrayed a tendency to lapse into German.

"Vail," announced Mr. Blum, with a pathetically reflective air, "when I look around this table, and see all these smiling faces, and smell dot cooking, and drink dot wine—my Gott!—dot reminds me of the day I lainded at the Baittery, forty-five years ago, with just exactly six dollars in my pocket. I didn't much think then that I'd be here to-day. Hey, Rebecca?"

"Ach, Gott is goot," Mrs. Blum responded, lifting her hand and casting her eyes toward the ceiling.

"Oh, papa," murmured Mrs. Koch, with profound emotion, "and you didn't think you'd be a graindpa, neither, with such a loafly little graindson, did you?"

"I didn't think I'd be much of any thing at all,

dot's a faict. I didn't haif no prospects, and I didn't haif no friends. If it hadn't been for my religion, I don't know what I done. I guess I commit suicide. But I was a good Jew, and I knew the Lord would help me. Then I got married, and dot brought me goot luck. When me and Rebecca got married, I was earning just exactly five dollars a week, as a journeyman tailor. There's an exaimple for you, Elias Bacharach."

"Your success has been very remarkable," observed the rabbi.

"My success—what you think my success has been due to, Elias Bacharach?"

"Oh, to business wisdom—to what they call genius, I suppose."

"No, sir—no, siree. Nodings of the kind. I owe my success to three things: to my God, my wife, and my industry. I ain't no smarter than any other man. But all my life I been industrious; and the Lord has given me good health; and my wife has taken care of my earnings. All my life I go to work at six or seven o'clock every morning; and I don't never leave my work till it can spare me. You aisk my son-in-law. He tell you that I get down-town every morning at seven o'clock; and I don't go home in the busy season till ten or eleven at night; and I'm sixty-five years old. Dot's what mait my success. Hey, Rebecca?"

"Ach, Gott!" cried Mrs. Blum. There was a frog in her voice, and her merry little eyes were dim with tears. She turned to Elias, and whis-

pered : " Oh, he's such a *goot* man, that man of mine ! "

" Elias Bacharach," pursued Mr. Blum, " you see dot lady there, next to you—my wife ? Vail, she's pretty near as old as I am, and maybe you don't think she's very hainsome. But I tell you this. She's just exactly as hainsome in my eyes to-day, as she was on the day when we got married ; and that's forty years ago already."

Mrs. Blum was blushing now, peony red ; and she cried out, " Oh, go 'vay ! Shut up ! " And all around the table a laugh went, at the fond old couple's expense.

When sobriety was restored, " I saw by the papers," said the rabbi, " that the manufacturers of clothing have been having trouble with their workmen, lately—strikes, and that sort of thing. How have you got along with yours ? "

" Oh, we—we got along maiknificent," Mr. Blum replied. " You see my son-in-law over there ? He mainage the whole affair. You aisk him."

" Yes, sir," said Mr. Koch—when Mr. Koch spoke, he raised his voice, and assumed a declamatory style, as though in fancy he were addressing a public meeting—" Yes, sir, when I saw that other houses were having trouble, I made up my mind to take the bull by the horns. So I called all our men together, and I talked to them up and down. I gave it to them straight. ' Look at here, boys,' said I, ' I want you to understand that the firm of Blum & Koch are not merely your employers ;

they're your friends. They're the best friends you've got, and don't you forget it. They mean to deal fairly and squarely with you in every thing, and they want to be dealt with the same way by you. You have rights, and we mean to recognize and protect your rights. You have interests, and we mean to make your interests our interests. And unless I'm hugely mistaken, we've always done it. Well, now, look at here. If you men ain't contented; if you think you've got any grievances; or if there's any demands you want to make, I'll tell you what you do. Don't you come to us as enemies, or strikers; but you just come right up like one friend to another, and you tell us in a friendly way what you want; and I promise you that every thing you ask will be considered, and every thing that's even fair-to-middling reasonable, will be done for you?' That's what I said to the men; and it worked like magic. They gave three cheers for Blum & Koch; and two or three days later they sent a committee with a statement of their claims. Well, sir, the granting of those claims involved a net loss of two per cent. annually on our profits; but we talked it over, and we made up our minds that the harm it would do us, wouldn't equal the good it would do the men; and so we gave in gracefully. There was one point, though, on which we held off. But we told them our reasons for holding off on that; and after they thought it over, they came and confessed that we were in the right."

"Would it be indiscreet to ask what that point was?" the rabbi ventured.

"Not at all. It was this. We got a man in our employ—one of our best hands—an Irishman of the name of O'Day—who's been with us ever since we started manufacturing. You know, when we first went into business, we simply jobbed. We didn't begin to manufacture till '76. Well, that man, O'Day, a year or two ago, he contracted a kind of a nervous disease, which makes it impossible for him to do his work when the other workmen are around. He can work perfectly well alone; but in the room with the others, he gets excited, and loses his head, and can't take a stitch. At the same time, he's got a family to support. So we've given him a machine, and we allow him to do his work in his own home. Well, sir, the men, they're dead set against tenement-house labor; and they wanted us to discharge O'Day. We wouldn't. It struck us as such a dirty mean thing to do, that we made up our minds the Lord would punish us, if we did it. We made up our minds that if we did that, we'd deserve to have bad luck right along. So we told the men we wouldn't. We told them that we'd rather shut down and go out of the trade, than discharge O'Day—which was the fact. We said we'd always been a prosperous house; and that we believed we owed our prosperity chiefly to the fact that we'd never done any thing to offend the Lord. We said that right out. And we said also that if any other man in our employ should

get in the same box, we'd treat him the same way. Well, as I say, the men, they thought it over, and they concluded that we were in the right."

"Yes, sir," added Mr. Blum, "we believe in treating our hands like feller-beings. I was a hand myself, already. Dot's a great advaintage. We don't go on the American plan, and treat them like machines."

"Now, don't you get started on that subject," cried Mr. Koch. "There's nothing he's so prejudiced about, as every thing American. *I'm* an American. We're all Americans. The Americans are the grandest people on the face of the earth."

"I don't see how you make dot out," retorted Mr. Blum.

"Well, I'll tell you how I make it out. I make it out this way. But first, you just hold on. Let's see how *you* make it out. What do *you* judge the Americans from? What do you know about them, anyhow? Why, you meet a few of them downtown; and you're prejudiced against them, to begin with, because they're Christians; and they're prejudiced against you, because you're a Jew; and you and they don't understand each other, and don't get on together; and the consequence is, your mutual prejudices are simply intensified. Well, now, that ain't a fair way to judge a people. I'll leave it to Dr. Gedaza if it is. The right way is, not to take individuals, but to take public sentiment. Public sentiment, that is to say, the feeling of the people in general on questions of importance

—that's the real index of a people's character. And there ain't another country in the world, where public sentiment is so high as it is right here in the United States of America."

"In what respects?" questioned the rabbi.

Mrs. Koch put in: "You needn't scream so, Washington. We ain't none of us daif." But her husband didn't hear her.

"In what respects?" he shouted, swelling with emotion. "Why, in—in every respect—on every question of honor and decency and morality. Here's a simple example. You go to Europe—you go to London, Berlin, Paris—I don't care which—and you notice the way the drivers beat their horses in the public streets; and nobody thinks any thing of it, nor dreams of interfering. If they tried to do it here, in New York, they'd be mobbed in no time. Well, that may seem a trifle; but it *ain't* a trifle. No, sir. For it points to a radical defect in the European character, and to a positive virtue in the American. It's the sense of fair play—that's what it is. Don't abuse a creature, simply because he's defenseless and you've got the upper hand. Do you see? Then take the American way of treating women. You let a respectable young girl, provided she's good-looking—you let Tillie, there—go out alone in Paris or Berlin, and when she gets back, you ask her whether she's been stared at, or insulted. But you let her go out here. Why, she could travel alone from New York to San Francisco, and not run a risk. Then take morality and de-

cency. And take the American way of doing business—the big, generous scale on which every thing is done, and the sense of honor among business men. They're sharp and close, I admit, but they mean what they say every time. I tell you, it's grand, it's beautiful ; it does me good every time I think of it. I go to Europe every two or three years on business ; and I get a chance of comparing. It makes me sick, the depravity, the corruption, and the stinginess, you meet everywhere over there."

The orator sank back in his chair, panting, and absent-mindedly mopped his brow with his napkin.

"Vail, dot's pretty good," cried Mr. Blum, with cutting irony, "and what you say of them big American bank swindlers, hey? They do things on a generous scale, don't they?"

"That's no argument," replied his son-in-law. "That don't signify any thing. If you want to argue, you just answer me this. If you think America's such a poor sort of a place, what did you come here for, any way?"

"Oh, I came because I didn't have no money ; and I got an idea the streets here was paved with gold."

"Well, now that you've got money, and now that you know the streets here ain't paved with gold, why don't you go back?"

"Oh, dot—dot is another question."

"Well, I'll tell you why. Because you like it here. Because, down deep, you think it's the finest

country in the world. You talk against it, for the love of talking. If you went to Europe, you'd be as homesick as anybody."

"Ain't my uncle a splendid conversationalist?" Tillie whispered to Elias.

"Washington," said his father-in-law, solemnly, "you got a head on you like Daniel Webster's."

"Oh, papa!" cried Mrs. Koch. "You make me die with laifing."

Mrs. Blum was rocking from side to side in her chair, and murmuring, "Gott! Gott! Gott!"

For a while, again, there was silence; which, again, by and by, Mr. Blum was the first to break.

"Sarah," he declared, addressing his daughter, "them pickles is simply graind."

"I opened a new jar to-day, papa," Mrs. Koch returned.

"Elias Bacharach," the old gentleman continued, "what *you* think of them pickles?"

"They're delicious," Elias said.

"Vail, sir, my daughter, she make them herself. I think she make the best pickles going."

"Oh, papa," protested Mrs. Koch, blushing. "How can you say dot, when Aintoinette Morgenthau is seated right next to you? Her pickles beat mine all hollow."

"No," cried Mrs. Morgenthau, magnanimously; "he's right. You're the boss."

"Vail," pursued Mr. Blum, judicially, "there is a difference. Aintoinette's pickles is splendid—dot's a faict. Maybe their flavor is just exactly as

good as yours. But yours is crisper. My Gott! when I put one of your pickles in my mouth, dot makes me feel said. I never taste no pickles so crisp as them, since I was a little boy in Chairmany, and ate my mamma's. Her pickles—oh, they was loafly, they was maiknificent."

"Ach, papa! You got so much zendimend!" his daughter exclaimed, with deep sympathy.

"You ought to taste my mamma's pickles," Tillie whispered to Elias. "Of course, Mr. Blum is prejudiced in favor of his daughter's."

"Been to the theater lately, Mr. Bacharach?" Mr. Koch called out.

"No," said Elias, little foreseeing the effect of his announcement; "I don't go to the theater much. I'm not very fond of it."

Immediately, from all directions, there was an outburst of astonishment and indignation; for in New York the theater has no patrons more ardent or devoted than the German Jews.

"Oh, Mr. Bacharach!"

"How can you *say* such a thing?"

"Gott in Himmel!"

"Oh, you don't mean it!"

"Vail, if I aifer!"

And so forth, till the poor fellow was blushing to the roots of his hair, and would have liked to bite his tongue out. Mr. Koch took up the cudgels in his behalf.

"Oh, come," he shouted, "don't make Mr. Bacharach feel as though he'd brought the Tower

of Babel crashing around his ears. He's got a right to his opinion, hasn't he? I understand the way he feels. In fact, I feel about the same way, myself. I go to the theater a good deal, I don't deny; but that's because there's nothing else to do. When I get home at night I'm fagged out, and I want a little amusement, and I take my wife and go to the theater. But all the same, I'm free to say that the theaters here in this town are about as poor as they can make them, and no mistake. Melodrama and burlesque—that's what they give you. Good, honest pictures of life—where'll you find them, I'd like to know? Now and then you get a big star—Salvini or Booth; now and then you get an old English comedy; but it's the average that I'm talking about, and I defy any man to say any thing in defense of that. You folks, you go to the theater, the same as I do, because you haven't got any thing else to do. But an intellectual young fellow like Mr. Bacharach, he don't need any outside amusements of that sort. He'd rather stay home, and think; wouldn't you, Mr. Bacharach?"

"Washington," said Mr. Blum, "you're talking about American theayters. But what you got against the Chairman theayter—the Thalia—hey?"

"Oh, you go 'way. You want to get back to our old quarrel," Mr. Koch retorted. "No, thanks."

"Sarah," said her father, abruptly, "there's one of your adopted children—my grainchild, consequently," he added, winking humorously at Elias.

He pointed toward the open window, at which appeared the red and weather-beaten visage of an elderly tramp. The tramp was peering in through the iron bars, and muttering an inarticulate, plaintive prayer—presumably for “cold victuals.” Mrs. Koch glanced over her shoulders at him, and then, addressing a hasty “Excuse me,” to the company, got up and left the room.

“She’s got about twenty of them fellers,” Mr. Blum informed Elias, “who she tries to be a mudder for. She feeds them, and clothes them, and gives them free lectures. They’re coming all the time. We don’t never sit down to a meal, but one of them sticks his head in the winder. Now, you just listen.”

Out in the area, Mrs. Koch’s high-pitched voice could be heard earnestly speaking as follows :

“Oh, you baid man ! You told me you wouldn’t touch another drop of liquor this week ! And now I see you been indoxicated ! You smell perfectly outracheous ; and dot loafly coat I give you, all spoiled ! I got a great mind to send you away, and naifer do nothing for you any more.”

A dull reverberation, like the far-distant roll of muffled drums, testified that the tramp was pleading in his defense. After which, Mrs. Koch went on : “Vail, you promise you don’t drink another glaiss of liquor till next Sunday, hey ? You cross your heart, and promise ? All right. Then, you take this. And bright and early, to-morrow morn-

ing, you come around here, and I give you a job. I want my cellar to be cleaned out."

"She makes them fellers say they'll come around to-morrow morning, every time she sees them ; but they don't never come," Mr. Blum announced. "She's keeping dot cellar dirty just on purpose, so dot some time she can give the chop to one of them good-for-nodings. I guess I clean it out myself, if dot goes on much longer.—Hey ! Hold on, there !" he cried, with sudden excitement. He ran to the window ; stopped the tramp, who was in process of departure ; and deposited a twenty-five-cent silver piece in his grimy palm. Returning to his seat, he appeared quite oblivious to the laughter at his expense, in which the others were indulging.

"You want to kill that old fellow, don't you?" Mr. Koch demanded. "Giving him a quarter ! Why, it will bring on an attack of delirium tremens."

"Dot's all right," Mr. Blum replied. "I know how it is myself. I was pretty near to being a traimp myself, one time, already. Hey, Rebecca ?"

"Du bist ein Engel—ja wohl !—ein himmlischer, wunderschoener Engel !" cried his wife, her broad face beaming like a harvest moon. Then she whispered to Elias, "Ach ! He is so loafly, dot Meester Blum !" and kept swaying her head, and smiling to herself, for the next ten minutes.

With the coffee, the gentlemen lighted their cigars, and, leaving their respective places, gathered in a knot at one end of the table, where they began

vociferously to exchange their views upon the state of trade. The ladies assembled at the other end, and discoursed of topics maternal and domestic. Lester was produced, and trotted upon his grandmother's lap, while his "points" were mooted and admired for the thousandth time. Finally, the men again covered their heads ; and the rabbi chanted his grace *after* meat. Then Mr. Koch proposed that the company should ascend to the parlor, and listen to some music. In the parlor the gentlemen lighted fresh cigars ; and Miss Tillie seated herself at the piano.

She played the second Hungarian Rhapsody, and the Allegro Appassionato from the Moonlight Sonata, and Chopin's Funeral March, and she played them all marvelously well. Her technic was exact and brilliant ; her feeling was ardent, intelligent and refined. For an hour she flooded the room with bewitching harmonies, and held every heart there spellbound. Elias, whose chief sentiment for her, a short while ago, had been one of half contemptuous amusement, felt an emotion very like genuine respect begin to stir within his bosom. It astonished him, it awed him a little, to find that a young lady who, in the commoner relations of life, appeared so crude and so prosaic, was possessed of such superb and consummate genius for a noble art. "There must be something *in* her, after all," he thought. She, perhaps, divined what was going on in his mind ; for, when he had finished complimenting her upon her performance, she said,

in a subdued voice, and with a gentler air than her usual one, "I know, Mr. Bacharach, that I'm not very much in conversation ; but when I sit down at the piano, it seems as though somehow I was another girl, and a great deal nicer one ; and I feel things that I don't ever feel anywhere else. I guess maybe music's my natural method of expression."

"Now, Mr. Bacharach," Mr. Koch said, when Elias and the rabbi were taking their leave, "don't treat us like strangers. Drop in on us any evening, or to dinner any Sunday afternoon. We'll always be glad to see you."

"Yes ; come over often," added Mrs. Koch.
"Come just exactly as if you was to home."

XVII.

ELIAS had enjoyed his dinner at the Kochs' very much. He had been greatly amused by it ; but he had derived from it, besides, a pleasure that was deeper than mere amusement—the pleasure, namely, which comes of contact with people whom we feel to be thoroughly good and wholesome.

"They, with their strident voices, and vulgar manners, and untutored ways of thinking, are the sort of Jews that Gentiles judge the race by," he reflected. "It is a comfort to know that underneath

all their superficial roughness and unrefinement, the core is sound and sweet."

It was with a sense of agreeable anticipation that, on the following Thursday evening, he started out to pay his digestion visit.

The maid-servant showed him into the parlor, and went off to announce him. Returning a moment later, she asked him to step down-stairs to the basement. There he was very cordially welcomed; and Mr. Koch explained, "I thought you'd rather join us down here, than have us come up to the show-room. (That's my nick-name for the parlor; pretty good, hey?) Down here it's more comfortable and homey."

Mr. and Mrs. Blum smiled and swayed their heads at him; and Mrs. Koch, clasping Lester to her bosom with one hand, offered him the other.

"We don't want to make company of you, Mr. Bacharach," Mr. Koch went on; "and so, after my wife has put Lester to bed, you must come around with us to Winkum's. We're going to meet my brother-in-law and my sisters around there."

"I shall be very happy," Elias responded. "But Winkum's—what is it? and where?"

"Oh, Winkum's is Terrace Garden. I always call it Winkum's, because a man named Winkum kept it when I first began to go there, years ago; and I've never got used to calling it by its new name. Force of habit."

Mrs. Koch passed Lester around, and everybody

kissed him good-night. Then she carried him from the room.

"Have a cigar?" asked Mr. Koch. "They're genuine—*Hoyo de Montereys*."

Elias took a cigar.

Mr. and Mrs. Blum were whispering together, on the sofa, over in the corner. He appeared to be urging her to do something, which she, with blushes and modest smiles, was protesting against.

"Come," cried Mr. Koch; "it ain't polite to whisper in company. What you people conspiring about?"

"I want her," Mr. Blum answered, "to offer Elias Bacharach some of her cheese-cake; and she's too baishful. Elias Bacharach, my wife every now and then, she make us a cheese-cake. You never taste any thing like it. It's simply elegant. Vail, she make us one to-day; and I want her to give you a bite of it, just to show what she can do. But she—she's just exactly as baishful as she was the day we got married; and that's forty years ago, already."

"Oh, Mrs. Blum," Elias pleaded, "I shall really feel very much offended, if you don't let me taste it. There's nothing in the world I like so well as cheese-cake. Please don't disappoint me."

Blushing and giggling, the old lady got up, and said, "Ach, Gott! All right," and waddled from the room. Presently she waddled back, and placed an enormous slice of cheese-cake, together with knife, fork, and napkin, upon the table. Then she

sat down, and crossed her hands upon her stomach, and watched Elias as he ate. Between his mouthfuls, he kept uttering ejaculations of delight and wonder: marvelous! delicious! never tasted anything equal to it in all my life! etc. She kept swaying her head and smiling. At the end, he vowed that the cheese-cake was a triumph of art, and confessed that antecedently he would not have believed such excellence attainable. Her husband demanded, "Didn't I tell you so?" The old lady herself was overcome, and could only gurgle, "Gott! Du lieber, lieber Gott!"

By and by Mrs. Koch reappeared; and her husband called out, "Well, let's start."

At Terrace Garden they found Mr. and Mrs. Sternberg and Mrs. Morgenthau seated at a round table under an ailanthus tree.

"Why, where's Tillie?" cried Mr. Koch.

"Oh, she had to stay at home to work," her mother answered. "Preparing for some lessons she has to give to-morrow."

The electric-lamps flared and sizzled. The band played tunes from comic operas. There were many people present, seated at similar tables, under similar trees, eating, drinking, smoking, chatting, listening to the music. Their countenances were mostly of the Semitic type. Every now and then a new party entered, from the café adjoining: an old gentleman and lady, a middle-aged gentleman and lady, and a troop of young folks of both sexes: three generations. Your Jew loves to take his

pleasure with his family to share it. His boon companions are, as a rule, his father and mother, his wife and children. The waiters dashed like meteors hither and thither. One of them stopped before the table of our friends; and Mr. Koch, having determined the sentiment of the meeting, ordered "beers all around."

"Vail," observed Mr. Blum, "to drink dot beer, and hear dot music, and breathe dot fresh air, dot's what I call solid comfort—hey?"

"Yes; and to see the people," added Mr. Koch. "I don't know as there's any thing that I enjoy better than I do to sit around here of a summer night, and watch the people—see them arrive in squads, and then notice their ways of enjoying themselves after they've got settled. It's quite a study; and every now and then you catch a glimpse into a regular romance. Now, Mr. Bacharach, you just take in that table over there. Can't you imagine how that young fellow's heart is thumping, as he whispers to her in that energetic manner? And see how she blushes, and fidgets with her fan, and pretends not to like it. And the old folks, her father and mother, of course—they sit placidly, with their backs turned, and have no attention for any thing but the beer and the music. I got a great mind to go up and nudge them. I have, as I'm alive."

"Don't you do nothing of the kind!" cried Mrs. Koch, indignantly. "The idea! How you like it

if some busy-body come up, and nudge my papa, when you was making loaf to me?"

"Well, now, what I admire about that couple," pursued Mr. Koch, "is their clever acting. They're trying hard not to give themselves away, and not to let people see how sweet they feel. Unless a fellow watched them mighty close, and had been there himself, he might really be deceived by them, and think they were talking about nothing more interesting than the weather. But you and me, Mr. Bacharach, we're shrewd, and we know better. She's a daisy, and no mistake, ain't she? And the young man—he looks like a respectable sort of a chap, too. Well, I guess I *won't* interfere. I guess I'll do as you say, Sarah. It may be a desirable match. What's your advice, mother-in-law?"

Mrs. Blum, quivering like a mass of jelly with suppressed mirth, responded, "Ach, Gott! Go 'vay! You make me die!"

Mr. Blum, his face wreathed in smiles, exclaimed, "Washington, you got more wit about you than any man I know. It's simply wonderful."

It seemed as though the Kochs knew every body that came. At all events, every body that passed their table stopped, and said how-d'ye-do, shaking hands, and addressing Mr. Koch as Wash. His usual rejoinder was: "First-class. How's yourself?"

"I'm sorry your daughter wasn't able to be here, Mrs. Morgenthau," Elias said.

"Oh, my daughter," Mrs. Morgenthau returned, "she works like a horse. You never saw such a worker. It's simply fearful. And such a *good* girl, Mr. Bacharach. Only nineteen years old, and earns more than a hundred dollars a month, and supports me and herself. Her uncle, my brother over there, he's as generous with his money as if it was water; and he gave Tillie a magnificent education. But she's bound to be self-supporting, and hasn't cost him a cent for nearly a year. Of course, he gives her elegant presents every once in awhile; but she pays our expenses by her own work. She's grand. She's an angel."

"You're right there," put in Mr. Koch. "Tillie's all wool, from head to foot."

"And a yard wide," added Mr. Blum.

"And such a brilliant musician," said Elias.

"Musician?" echoed her mother. "Well, I should say so. You ought to hear her play, when she really knuckles down to it. Why, you—you'd jump, you'd get so excited. The other night she was only drumming—for fun. I tell you what you do. You come around and call on us some evening, over in Beekman Place. Then you'll hear her, the right way."

"I shall be very happy to. It's very good of you to ask me."

"Good? Oh, pshaw; don't mention it. Tillie'll be delighted."

"We shall esteem it an honor to welcome you in our home, Mr. Bacharach," Mr. Sternberg

said, with a stiffness which he mistook for courtliness.

"Yes, come over, do," added Mrs. Sternberg. "Come Sunday evening and take supper with us."

Elias agreed to do so, with thanks.

"You folks come over, too," said Mrs. Sternberg, addressing the Koch contingent.

"You may count upon us," replied Mr. Koch, "providing you'll have enough to eat."

At which sally there was a general laugh.

"What you all laughing at?" the wag proceeded. "I hope you don't think I'm joking. I wouldn't want to come to supper with a family, if they didn't have enough to go around."

At this, the laughter was redoubled; and Mrs. Morgenthau demanded in a whisper of Elias, "Ain't my brother immense?"

"There's either a ball or a wedding going on in there," Mr. Koch announced, pointing to the brightly-lighted windows of the hall, that abuts upon the garden. "Hear that music? It's a string-orchestra, playing dance tunes. Running a race with our band here. Wonder which will come in first."

Pretty soon the doors of the hall were thrown wide open; and a stream of young people poured forth into the garden. The men wore dress-suits and patent-leather pumps; the ladies, evening costumes, of red, white, yellow, and other bright-hued silks. They took possession of the unoccupied tables round about, and proceeded to

make merry in a very noisy and whole-souled manner.

"Yes, it's a wedding, sure enough," said Mr. Koch ; "and here comes the bride."

The bride, a buxom daughter of Israel, of twenty odd, attired in canary-colored satin, escorted by her bridesmaids, and followed at a respectful distance by the groom and his four best men, drew up to the table nearest that of our friends, and called for beer and cheese ; which, when the waiter brought them, she attacked with a vigor and with a directness that were charming to witness. Indeed, so interesting did her immediate neighbors find the spectacle, that not a word was spoken among them for a long while. They sat still, and watched her with smitten eyes. At last, however, she called out to her husband : "Nun, gut, mein Turteltäubchen ; ich bin ganz satt und glücklich. Komm 'mal mit mir, und noch ein wenig lass uns tanzen." And then Mrs. Koch said that she was sorry to break up a party, but she really thought she'd better go home, as Laistair might have woke up, and he would be frightened if his mamma wasn't there to put him back to shleep. This expression of maternal solicitude produced its due effect ; and, with many hearty good-nights, the company departed upon their several ways.

Sunday evening, Elias rang the Sternberg door-bell at six o'clock. The Kochs and the Blums had already arrived ; and they, with the host and

hostess and Mrs. Morgenthau and Tillie, were assembled in the back-parlor, enjoying the view from the bay-window—up, down, and across the river, and over the Long Island country on the other side. He got, of course, a very effusive reception. Mr. Koch inquired what the good word was. Miss Tillie said she was *so* glad to see him, and that it was perfectly elegant of him to come. Mr. Sternberg mixed him a vermouth cocktail, “to put an edge on his appetite.” And Mr. Blum declared, vail, he was looking splendid.

“Supper’s all ready,” proclaimed Mrs. Sternberg, and led the way to the back-yard, where, protected by an awning, the table fairly groaned beneath its burden of good things. “Say, Wash,” she called out to her brother, “think there’s enough?” Which proved that Mr. Koch’s witticisms were not speedily forgotten in his admiring circle.

Elias thought it exceedingly pleasant thus to feast in the open air, while the sky and river glowed with the reflected splendor of the sunset; and said so to Miss Tillie. She replied that it was simply ideal, that they always did it in good weather, and that it was quite the rage among the residents of Beekman Place. Beekman Place, she went on, was the grandest street in the city, and she was awfully attached to it. She’d lived there most all her life, and all the memories of her childhood were associated with it. She remembered when she used to go fishing, with a thread and a

bent pin, off the docks below there, and how scared her mamma used to get, lest she should tumble into the water, and be drowned. She didn't know what she'd do—she knew she'd feel just perfectly fearful, any how—when she had to leave, and dwell elsewhere, as she supposed she would some day. Oh, no, they weren't thinking of moving. She meant when she got married.

"Why," exclaimed her interlocutor, "I didn't know you were engaged."

"Well, I'm *not* engaged. But I suppose I'll *get* engaged before I die. All girls do."

But couldn't she persuade her husband to come and live in Beekman Place?

Well, that would depend a good deal upon what sort of a man he was. Most men wouldn't want to come so far out of the way. She knew, when she was at college, it used to take her pretty much all day going and coming, and cost a regular fortune in car-fares.

College? The Normal College?

Yes. Class of '82. Salutatory.

Indeed! That was a great honor.

"Well, may be it was; but I didn't care a cent for it. I wanted to be Valedictory. I worked hard for it, for four years; and when I didn't get it, you can't imagine how horribly bad I felt."

"Oh, yes; I can understand. It must have been very hard."

"Florence Rosenbaum got it. She, and I, and an American girl named Redwood, had been rivals

ever since we were freshmen. Some years one would lead, and some years another. But at the finish, Rosenbaum came in first, and Redwood third, and I second. I'd just as soon have come in last."—Tillie paused; appeared puzzled; finally demanded, "Why, what you looking so queer about?"

"Why, nothing. I didn't know I was looking queer."

"I thought something was choking you, you got so red in the face."

"Been down to the beach this season, Mr. Bacharach?" broke in Mr. Koch, having reference, presumably, to Coney Island. Elias replied in the negative. "Well, then, I tell you what let's do," Mr. Koch proceeded, addressing the table at large; "let's make up a party to go down to the beach some afternoon this week, hey?"

After a clamorous debate, it was decided that they should dine at the beach on the following Wednesday evening, provided the elements were favorable.

Supper over, they went up stairs, and sat in the dusk, smoking their cigars, and looking out of the bay window, while Tillie played. "I'm going to give you a Chopin evening," she had said. Elias, stretched in a great easy-chair, watching the moon float up red and swollen from behind the castellated prison on Blackwell's Island, and listening to the subtle, dreamy measures of the Berceuse, thought he had never before experienced such restful and

satisfying pleasure. It got dark. The moon shrank and paled. A million diamonds sparkled upon the bosom of the river. Along the opposite embankment, the street lamps gleamed like fallen stars. A soft breeze, laden with the odors of lilac and wistaria, stole in at the window. The music, sweet and solemn, thrilled the darkness like the voice of a beautiful, sad, strange spirit. Suddenly it died away. Somebody lighted the gas. There was an outbreak of talk and laughter. The spell was broken. Elias started, got upon his feet, bade his friends good-night, went home.

XVIII.

THEY had a very noisy and jolly time down at the beach ; a time which, they all agreed, was simply grand. They walked to and fro along the shore, and went in for a bath, and ate a capital dinner, and enjoyed the music, and met lots of their friends, and laughed and talked till their sides ached, and their throats were sore. Mrs. Blum, in her bathing costume, was the butt of many innocent jokes. Her husband said she resembled a *blaidder*. Elias had to think hard, before he caught the idea, and recognized its force. They returned to the city by the boat ; and, having reached the Battery, Mr. Blum gave expression to the universal sentiment when he declared, " Vail, dot sail up the

Bay, dot was maiknificent, dot was perfectly immense."

"Come over soon now, won't you, Mr. Bacharach?" Mrs. Morgenthau asked, as Elias was tearing himself away.

"Yes, do," chimed in Miss Tillie.

And he promised that he would.

He redeemed his promise about a week later. Tillie played to him to his heart's content, and afterward she amused him with her conversation.

On his way home, "She's a good little thing," he soliloquized; "thoroughly well-meaning and kind-hearted. Crude, of course, and uncultivated; but a fellow must make allowances for that sort of thing. She has plenty of mother-wit; and her dash—her abundance of animal spirits—it—it's positively stimulating. Then she plays—well, her playing is marvelous, masterly—such execution—such expression—really, no praise could do justice to her playing. And she's not at all bad-looking, either."

He called pretty soon again; and after that he got into the habit of calling regularly at frequent intervals. He was invariably welcomed with exceeding warmth, and treated with a certain deference that no doubt tickled his vanity. Besides, a bay-window overlooking the East River is a pleasant place to spend a hot summer's night. And Tillie's music, it was worth traveling miles to hear.

In his hours of solitude he led a very useless and meaningless existence. He did not paint much;

and when he did, his occupation proved neither profitable nor enjoyable. He read a good many light novels ; he spent a good deal of time seated at his studio window, gazing off across the tree-tops, and lapsing into a state of mental vacuity, that approached as near to total unconsciousness as is compatible with sustained animation. He even went to the theater now and then, escorting Tillie and her mother. To Mrs. Morgenthau he had taken a genuine liking. There was something so hearty and vigorous about her, something almost manly. His palate was dulled. He craved strong flavors.

"They're going to the country before long, aren't they?" the rabbi asked one day.

"Yes ; the first week in July."

"Well, don't you think we ought to have them to dinner, before they go?"

"That wouldn't be a bad idea," confessed Elias.

And on the following Sunday to dinner they all came.

Mr. Koch expatiated in his oratorical style upon the charms of the Catskills ; and the others unanimously joined him in urging Elias and the rabbi to "come along." The rabbi replied that he positively couldn't. His professional duties were such as to compel him to remain in town.

"But there's no reason why *you* shouldn't," he concluded, turning to his nephew ; "and I think decidedly you'd better."

At this, they concentrated their fire upon Elias ;

and in the end, he said, well, perhaps he would run up for a week or two some time in August.

But he did not wait till August. After they were gone, he found the city intolerably dull. What to do with himself, how to divert himself, where to seek a substitute for the excitement that they had afforded him, he did not know. He began to realize that he had grown very dependent upon their society ; likewise, that he possessed but very few and feeble resources within himself. He did not like this. It damaged his self-esteem. But he could not deny it, he could not get the better of it. He craved the sound of their voices ; he craved Tillie's music ; he craved the exuberant friendliness with which they treated him. The idleness, the monotony, the insipidity, of his daily life in the city, he could not endure. In the copious leisure that it left him, he would sometimes—despite his customary inanition—he would sometimes fall to thinking ; and when he thought, he did not admire himself ; he even sluggishly despised himself ; a sense of his uselessness bore in upon him ; he was anxious to escape himself. So, toward the middle of July, he packed his trunk, and went to Tanners-town. He had said that he would run up for a week or two. But he did not return to New York until the others did so, early in September.

He and Tillie were together a great deal. They sat next to each other at table. In the daytime they would take walks together, or lounge together about the piazza of the hotel, or play croquet

together ; or, haply, she would lie in a hammock, while he read to her, or sketched her. In the evening, if there was dancing, they would dance together ; for she had taught him to dance. Or, perhaps, they would go together for a stroll by moonlight, or again sit together on the piazza in the dark. He liked her very much indeed. On closer acquaintance, her crudity became less conspicuous. Either he got accustomed to it, or it was eclipsed by her many and sterling virtues. She was a paragon of unselfishness—always doing something for somebody, always giving up something that somebody else might enjoy it. When they went for a drive, Tillie always took the least desirable seat. When there was an errand to be run, Tillie always ran it. When a letter had to be carried to the post, Tillie always carried it. Etc., etc. Her attitude toward her mother struck Elias as especially fine. Such filial respect, solicitude, obedience, unwearying devotion, he had never witnessed before. She was constantly looking after her mother's comfort, fetching and carrying for her mother, doing for her mother. If a pretty fan were for sale in the village, she must purchase it for mamma. If there were pretty wild flowers growing along the road-side, she must gather them for mamma. If mamma breathed a wish, Tillie would devote hours, if need were, to the execution of it. For hours, if mamma had a head-ache, Tillie would stand upon her feet, stroking mamma's forehead. Her mother appeared to be her passion, almost her religion. And how

could Elias help admiring such a model daughter? And then, her music, and her pretty face. *Could* anybody play like that, *could* anybody possess such bright blue eyes, and not have a gentle soul, even a spark of divinity, glowing beneath the surface? What mattered faulty grammar, or too robust a voice? On the whole, he told himself, he had a genuine affection for Tillie. She was a rough diamond; rough, but susceptible of the highest degree of polish. She only needed time and refining influences, to make a charming lady. He liked her very much indeed, with a patronizing, brotherly sort of liking. What her sentiment for him might be, he never thought to ask himself, but tacitly assumed that it was one of cordial friendliness.

Mr. Koch and Mr. Sternberg staid but a fortnight apiece. Mr. Blum, the ladies, and Elias, staid till the beginning of September; when they all came back to town in company. Elias then resumed his frequent visiting in Beekman Place.

One evening after dinner the rabbi asked Elias to step into his study.

"I had a call from Mr. Koch this afternoon," the rabbi said.

"Ah?" returned Elias.

"Yes. He stopped in on his way up-town."

"That so? Any thing special?"

"Well, yes. That's why I wanted to see you, now. He spoke about you." Emphasis on the "you."

"About me? Indeed? Why, what could he have had to say about me?"

"Well, he thought it was strange that you didn't come to see him, and wanted to know why you were holding off."

"Come to see him? Why, I went to see him only last week. Holding off? I don't know what he can mean."

"No, no. You don't understand. He meant about declaring your intentions."

"What intentions? Intentions? I don't know what you're driving at, I'm sure."

"Why, your intentions in respect to his niece, of course."

"My intentions in respect—Mercy!" gasped Elias, with honest astonishment, as the idea suddenly dawned upon him. "You don't mean to say that—that he imagines—that—that I—Good Lord!"

"Why, certainly," said the rabbi. "How could he help it? You haven't taken Washington I. Koch for a fool, I hope. Besides, your attentions have been so very marked, that no great penetration was necessary. *I'm* not much at that sort of thing, but even I saw through them long ago. In fact, no man with half an eye open could have failed to do so."

"Merciful Powers!" exclaimed Elias, and sat dumb.

"There's no use making so much ado about it, either," pursued the rabbi. "It was bound to come out, you know, sooner or later; and, at any rate, you have no reason for feeling ashamed of it."

"But—" began Elias.

"Oh, I dare say. I dare say, it's a little embarrassing. That's not unnatural. But then, you couldn't have kept it a secret forever. By its very nature, it was bound to come out."

"But," Elias began anew, "but it's not true. It's the most preposterous mistake I ever heard of. I never had any such idea, never dreamed of having any such idea. Intentions! Why, I always thought of her as—as scarcely more than a child. I don't see how anybody could have made such a stupid, ridiculous blunder. Well, I did give Mr. Koch credit for more intelligence."

"Elias," demanded the rabbi, with very great seriousness, "are you in earnest, or is this a comedy?"

"A comedy? I tell you it's outrageous. I never was more in earnest in my life."

"And I am to understand that you have made Miss Morgenthau the object of your particular attentions—as you can't deny you have done—and in that way have necessarily endeared yourself more or less to her—I am to understand that you have deliberately done this, without meaning eventually to make her your wife?"

"Particular attentions! I've paid her no particular attentions. I took a friendly interest in the girl, and behaved toward her in a friendly way. My wife! The notion never entered my head—nor hers, either, I'll venture to say."

"I can hardly believe it," said the rabbi, shaking

his head incredulously. "I don't like to believe it. I don't like to believe you capable of—of such—"

"Such what? What have I done? Is it my fault, if people jump to false conclusions? Am I to blame for their lack of sense? Can't a young man be ordinarily polite and decent to a young girl, without every body fancying that he is spoony over her?"

"No, he can't ; not if you call it ordinarily polite and decent to visit a young lady regularly every week or so, and spend a couple of months at her side in the country. From that sort of politeness and decency, her parents always infer that he means matrimony. It gives the same impression to society, also, and frightens other young men away."

"Well," groaned Elias, "I suppose it's needless for me to say I'm sorry. I *am* sorry ; but that's neither here nor there. If I had at all foreseen—But what's the use of iffing? Now that you have opened my eyes, I'll stop visiting her. That's at once the least and most I can do. Well, I'm glad it went no further. So far, at any rate, no harm has been done."

"No harm done ! Well, I must say, your complacency astounds me. No harm done ! You—you get a young girl's expectations all aroused—get her heart set on you—get her and her family to taking for granted that you want to marry her—get the whole world to talking about her as your sweet-

heart—and then coolly dismiss the matter with a No harm done ! No harm done, forsooth ! ”

“ Oh, come,” protested Elias ; “ you exaggerate. It’s not so bad as all that. Whatever you and her uncle and the others may have suspected, *she* never misconstrued my feeling for her. She has too much good sense. Why, I never spoke a word to her that could, by torturing it even, be interpreted as any thing more than friendly. As for her heart being set upon me, and her expectations aroused, that’s rubbish, pure and simple rubbish.”

“ Is it, though ? ” retorted the rabbi. “ Her uncle didn’t seem to think so.”

“ What do you mean ? ” cried Elias.

“ I mean that Mr. Koch gave me to understand that Miss Morgenthau is in love with you.”

“ Gave you to understand ? Oh, you *misunderstood*.”

“ I could scarcely have done that. He told me so in just so many words.”

“ Well, then, he didn’t know what he was talking about.”

“ Perhaps not ; but he had it directly from Mrs. Morgenthau. When he asked why you didn’t pop the question, I said it might be that you were doubtful about what kind of an answer you’d get. Then he assured me that you could set your mind at rest on that score, for Mrs. Morgenthau had told him that Tillie thought all the world of you. The young girl has confided in her mother, as a young girl should.”

"Oh, this is horrible!" Elias gasped.

"Yes, horrible; I think that's the right name for it, if what you say about your own feeling is true. If you don't mean to marry her, I can't see how it could be much worse. But now, honestly, are you sure you don't?"

"Why, I tell you, I never thought of such a thing—never dreamed of it."

"Well, it isn't too late to think of it, even now. It's a fine chance. I advise you to consider a little before you throw it away. She'd make you an excellent wife, and bring a snug sum of money with her. Mr. Koch mentioned something like twenty thousand dollars. You can have her for the asking. Such an opportunity may never occur again."

"You speak as though it were a bargain—just as I should expect Mr. Blum to speak of what he calls a chop-lot. You don't suppose I want her twenty thousand dollars? I have more money than I've any right to, already; I, who do nothing to earn any. I think it ought to settle the question, when I say I don't love the girl."

"What do you mean by love?"

"What is generally meant by love? I mean that I don't care for her in any way except a friendly one."

"Well, what do you mean by friendly?"

"I mean that I like her—just as a fellow might like his sister."

"You make a distinction without a difference. Or rather, no; the difference is against you. Love,

in the sense in which you use the word, isn't what's wanted. A strong liking, an affection, is more to the point. I was struck the other day, when looking in the dictionary, to find, among its other definitions, *love* defined as a 'thin silk stuff.' Well, affection is a stout woolen fabric. For matrimonial purposes, for daily wear and tear, the latter is by far the better."

"There's room for two opinions about that. I may be allowed to have my own."

"Certainly ; though your opinion would coincide with mine, if you were wiser. But let us confine ourselves to the practical aspects of the case. You say you like the young lady very much ?"

"Yes, but—"

"Not so fast. Now, if you like her very much, would you not wish, if possible, to spare her the pain and the mortification of having her hopes in your regard disappointed ?"

"If possible, of course. But it isn't possible."

"One moment. Now, don't you think she's a very estimable young woman ? Don't you think the man who got her for his wife would be a fortunate fellow ?"

"Other things equal—that is, if he loved her—yes, I think so."

"Well and good. Then what I want you to consider is this. In the first place, here is a young lady, whom you like very much, ready and willing to become your wife. You've got to take her or leave her. Unless you profit by your chances, and

secure her now, you'll have to give her up altogether, and lose her for good. In the second place—whether intentionally or unintentionally doesn't matter—you have, by your assiduous devotion, contrived to win her love, and to cause her and her family to expect that you were going to ask for her hand in marriage. Consequently, in the event of your now abruptly breaking off with her, and discontinuing your visits, you will occasion the young lady herself much unmerited grief and humiliation, you'll set busy-bodies far and wide to gossiping, and you'll bring no end of odium down upon yourself. Consider these things, and you'll see that you've got yourself into a very unpleasant situation, a very tight fix. There's only one way out of it ; but that way is strewn with roses. Matrimony ! Marry her ! Why, if I were in your place, I shouldn't hesitate an instant."

"If you were in my place, I don't think you'd know what to do."

"If I were in your place, I should congratulate myself. I should be thankful for my tremendous good-luck, in winning such a wife. Tillie Morgenthau is a jewel, if there ever was one. She has certain peculiarities of manner, I admit ; but six months of intimate association with you, would tone them down to nothing. She's as pretty as a picture ; she plays wonderfully ; and her character is pure gold. Just think, boy, that this prize is within your grasp ! Then, besides, you ought to get married, anyhow. Such an opportunity comes

but once in a lifetime. I'm an old man ; and I know what I'm talking about."

"That may be ; but that makes no difference. I simply repeat, I don't love her, I'm not in love with her. I shall never be in love with any body. My capacity for loving has been exhausted. I shall remain a bachelor all my life."

"Oh, you try my patience. Your talk is silly. Your head is full of romantic notions, like a school-girl's. Remain a bachelor ! Don't you know that every man is required by our religion to marry and bring up a family ? Love ? Gammon ! Love marriages in nine cases out of ten are unhappy. Hundreds, thousands, of better men than you, have married without the sickish sentiment which you call love ; and happier marriages were never made. I tell you, if you don't marry Miss Tillie Morgenthau, you'll live to repent it bitterly. Think of how she would brighten up this gloomy old house. Think of the children. Think—Oh, you're throwing away the flower of your life. The Lord—yes, sir—the Lord God of Israel has put this woman in your path ; and you, with your imbecile delusions about love, see fit to spurn her !"

Elias held his peace.

By and by, "Well ?" questioned the rabbi.

"Well, what ?"

"Well, what are you going to do ? Have you thought better of it ?"

"I am still of the same mind."

"You still mean to fly in the face of Providence?"

"Well, if it pleases you to phrase it that way, yes."

"And your knowledge of the wound you are going to inflict upon Miss Tillie—you don't flinch, you don't falter a little, at that?"

"What can I do? I can't help it. I—I suppose I was born to cause sorrow in the world. I have already spoiled the life of one young girl. Now, it looks as though I were in a fair way to spoil the life of another."

"Elias, the two affairs ought not to be mentioned in the same breath. In *that* one, you weren't responsible. In this, you are. Being responsible, and seeing your duty plain before you, I don't understand how you can hesitate. Don't you realize what you have done? You have gone to work and compromised this young girl; yes, sir, *compromised* her. And having done that, you are bound in common honor to marry her. Why, sir, throughout this city, in every Jewish family in this city, if you don't marry her, she'll be talked about. Think of that. Furthermore, I tell you, it's the will of the Lord. If you don't marry her, the Lord will punish you. You'd better consider a little. You'd better think twice, before you determine in cold blood to break this young girl's heart, and make her name a by-word among gossips, and defy the will of the Lord our God. It's a fearful responsibility."

"Oh, don't tell me that. I know that. It couldn't be worse. I should very gladly marry her, or do any thing else, to mend matters, to repair the mischief which, it seems, I have wrought ; only, I can't believe that it is right to marry without love. If, as you say, it is the will of the Lord, why hasn't the Lord made me love her?"

"He *has* made you love her—with the best sort of love—with a genuine, strong affection. If you don't feel a flimsy, volatile passion for her, it is because that isn't the thing that's needed in marriage. Who's the better judge of right and wrong, who's the better qualified to interpret the will of God, you or I? You'd do well to call to mind how once before I warned you, and you chose to make light of my warning ; and then, what happened? Now, here is my last word. You marry Miss Morgenthau, or you'll regret it to your dying day."

After a long pause, "Well," said Elias, "I'll think about it."

"You'll have to think quickly," rejoined the rabbi ; "for I promised Mr. Koch that he should hear from you by to-morrow evening at the latest."

"Oh, you ought to have allowed me more time than that. I really need more time than that."

"Time? What do you want time for? Are you absolutely lacking in decision of character? Why, in a case like this, a man, who *is* a man, ought to say yes or no on the spot. There's nothing that needs deliberation. You have to make the simplest kind of a choice, the easiest possible

choice. You have to choose between obvious, palpable right, and obvious, palpable wrong. If you took a year to think about it, the matter would still stand precisely as it stands to-day. I'm surprised at you—surprised that you can hesitate a minute."

"Well, if you object to my taking time, then the only thing left for me to do, is to repeat what I've said already."

"That you won't marry her?"

"If I've got to decide instantly, on the spot, yes."

"Well, then, take time; and much good may it do you. We'll talk about this again to-morrow. I hope meanwhile the Lord may enlighten you, and move your stubborn spirit. Now, good-night."

When they met at breakfast next morning, "Well," began the rabbi, "have you thought about it?"

"Yes," replied Elias, "I have thought about it—all night long."

"Contrived to make up your mind?"

"Yes, I have made up my mind."

The rabbi's pale skin turned a shade paler. He waited a little, before asking, "Well?" His voice was faint and tremulous.

"Well," said Elias, "I have made up my mind to do as you wish—to call upon Mr. Koch this evening, and do as you wish."

The rabbi jumped up from his seat, grasped

Elias's hand, wrung it fervently, and cried, "It is the will of the Lord! The Lord be praised!"

Elias held his tongue. He was looking very grave this morning.

"Oh, but you have lifted a load from off my spirit," pursued the rabbi, returning to his place. "At last I shall be contented. If only your mother might have lived to enjoy this day!"

"I am glad you are pleased," said Elias.

"But tell me, boy, tell me all about it. What finally decided you?"

"Oh, it's a long story. It wouldn't interest you."

"On the contrary, I'm most anxious to hear it. Go on. Out with it. Come."

"Well, it isn't very exciting. It's simply this. I have tried to be honest, and to get at the real truth. I have tried to analyze and comprehend my own feelings, and to look the circumstances squarely in the face. The result is, I believe that you are right—that I have more or less seriously compromised her, and am bound in duty, therefore, to marry her, if she wants me to. I don't think I am swayed by any selfish motive. I think my desire to act honorably, to do the right thing, is sincere and genuine. The prospect of having her for my wife gives me no pleasure at all. I must confess that it is no longer repugnant to me, either. It awakes no emotion of any kind. It leaves me totally indifferent. This evening, as I say, I shall propose for her hand. If, as you expect, I am ac-

cepted, well and good. If I should be rejected, equally well and good. I shall neither be pleased nor disappointed, in the one event or in the other. The long and short of the business is, that I never hope to be happy in this world ; nor to be much of any thing, except listless and sluggish. I've used up my share of happiness, already. So far as I can see, I'm utterly good-for-nothing, besides. I have already caused plenty of misery. If, by marrying this young girl, I can keep from causing any more, and perhaps even become the means of a little positive happiness—why, I can't think of any better use to which to put myself. I dare say I shall be able to make her a tolerable husband, as husbands go. I shall try to, any how. It's a pity I was ever born ; but that can't be helped at this late date. If I could be quietly annihilated, wiped out of existence, I think that would be the best thing all around ; but I haven't the courage to do away with myself. So, as long as I've got to go on cumbering the face of the earth, when I see a chance to render myself comparatively inoffensive, it seems as though I'd better seize it and improve it."

"Elias," said the rabbi, "I don't know whether to scold you, or to laugh at you. You're morbid, abominably morbid. This marriage is exactly what you need, to brace you up, and put a little health into you. You talk like a French novel. You have cut open your doll, and found it stuffed with saw-dust. Poor, pessimistic fellow ! Bah ! I shall neither

scold you, nor laugh at you. I shall congratulate you. And in a few months now, I shall have the satisfaction, in my professional capacity, of pronouncing you the happiest of husbands."

"If I talk like a French novel," returned Elias, "I talk, at least, as I feel. I mean every word I say. The one conviction that abides with me all the time, lies heavily upon my conscience day and night, is the conviction of my utter uselessness and worthlessness in the world. Why, the cook in our kitchen, the man who looks after our furnace, does more practical good, has a better claim to his bread and butter, than I. I have lived twenty-seven years. All that I have been able to accomplish in all that time, is the irretrievable ruin of an innocent young girl's life. That's the one ponderable result of my twenty-seven years' existence—the one thing I've got to show for it."

"And your pictures? Do your pictures count for nothing?"

"Oh!" cried Elias, with a sudden outburst of passion, "don't talk to me of my pictures. I should like to burn every stitch of canvas that I have ever put my hand to, and spoiled for better purposes. I *have* burned all that remained in my possession. As long as I live, I shall never touch a brush again."

From which it would appear that our hero had wrought himself into a very unenviable frame of mind.

To narrate at length what followed would be mel-

ancholy ; and it would be superfluous. Tillie and Elias became engaged. Their engagement was celebrated by three redoubtable dinners—one at the Sternbergs', one at the Kochs', and one at the dark house on Stuyvesant Park. Their wedding was set down for the following January. Then, according to the regular Jewish custom, for three successive Sunday afternoons, they were "at home" at the residence of the prospective bride. Hither flocked scores, even hundreds, of their friends, and offered their congratulations—their friends, and their friends' friends, and the friends of all relatives and connections, far and near. Much wine was drunken at these receptions, much cheese-cake eaten, much tobacco smoked ; and oh, what a quantity of talk, in what a variety of accents, from best to worst, roused cacophonous echoes in the walls and ceiling ! Among our New York Jews, it may be said with material literalness, a subtle chain of countless rings the next unto the farthest brings. If one had wished to obtain a bird's-eye-view of the metropolitan Jewish world, to behold in indiscriminate procession all sorts and conditions of Jews and Jewesses, one could not have done better than arrive early and remain till the end of one of these Sunday afternoons. Old and young, good and bad, wise and foolish, rich and poor, savage and civilized ; fat Jews and lean Jews, shabby Jews and shoddy Jews, gentlemanly Jews and rowdy Jews ; petty tradesmen, banker princes, college professors, commercial travelers, doctors, lawyers, students,

musicians : all came, accompanied by their wives and their children, their parents, and their parents-in-law, and their brothers and sisters-in-law, to add their quota to the great jubilation. And such a lot of hand-shaking as there was transacted among them, to be sure ; for, at a congratulation-party of this description, you must not only shake hands with the betrothed couple and their immediate family, but likewise with each of your fellow-guests, pronouncing, as you do so, the shibboleth : "Congratulate you," or, "Gratulire." Then, as has been said, there was an unceasing flow of wine, tobacco smoke, and talk ; and the place sounded like a stock exchange or bedlam.

This sort of thing—sitting for joy, it is sometimes called—may be sufficiently amusing for a while ; but three successive Sundays of it are rather too much ; and Elias and Tillie were both heartily glad when at last it was over.

Tillie, all smiles and blushes and animation, was the happiest of happy little persons. Over and above the generous settlement he was to make for her at her marriage, Mr. Koch had drawn a check to her order for no less dazzling a sum than two thousand dollars, the proceeds of which she and her mother were now very busy spending for her trousseau. Elias could not help catching something of her good spirits. He could not remain quite dejected or impassive in the presence of such an exuberant joy as hers. He began to be fonder of her than ever, even, he sometimes told himself,

to love her after a fashion ; but it was a neutral, passionless sort of love, and had its source, not in impulse, but in habit. He looked forward with a certain mild pleasure to his union with her, and was mildly thankful that he had followed the rabbi's counsel. They were not much alone together, he and she ; and when they were, their deportment was far enough from lover-like. He, indeed, seldom opened his mouth, save to answer a question, or to utter a sympathetic *oh* or *ah* ; but listened to Tillie's vivacious descriptions of the dresses she was having made, or sat silent in the bay-window, and watched the boats sail by on the river, while she played his favorite music to him. He took her and her mother to the theater as often as either expressed a desire to go, and tried heroically not to yawn or appear bored. He escorted them, also, to a good many dancing parties, and dinner parties, as well as to the famous Advance Club ball, where Tillie excited a vast deal of admiration as an ear of corn, and just narrowly missed the prize, getting instead an honorable mention.

Alone, Elias persistently fought shy of himself, persistently shunned self-communion. He dared not open his eyes, and look himself squarely in the face. He knew that it would not be an inspiring spectacle. His studio he had locked up, with the resolution never to touch his paints any more forever. He sought to escape from himself in reading ; and, indeed, he read an astonishing multitude of books upon an astonishing multitude of sub-

jects. But now and then, in spite of his efforts to be blind, the actual Elias Bacharach would loom up big before him, in all his ghastly demoralization; and sick with self-loathing, he would bury his face in his hands, and demand bitterly, impotently, why he had ever been born? what single earthly purpose he was good for? why he could not be abolished utterly forthwith? But these dark moods, or lucid intervals, were commonly of short duration. He was generally able to forget them in a novel. He watched his wedding-day draw near and nearer, without the slightest quickening of the pulse. As I have said, he took a certain insipid pleasure in the thought of his marriage. He fancied it would be rather agreeable than otherwise to have Tillie a constant inmate of his house. She would brighten it up, put a little electricity into its atmosphere, relieve the excessive tedium of life in it. But this pleasure was very mild indeed; the languid pleasure that one might experience at the prospect of becoming the owner of a languidly admired vase or piece of furniture. Yes, he was glad enough that it was going to be his; but he did not care a great deal one way or the other; and as the day approached which was to inaugurate his proprietorship, he felt no flutter of the heart, no accession of eagerness or interest. Tillie's excitement, on the contrary, intensified perceptibly. It had the effect of beautifying her, and of civilizing her. With heightened color and brightened eyes, she was an exceedingly pretty girl, one that any man might

have been proud of for his bride. Then, she did not talk half so loudly as she had used to do ; and her choice of words, phrases, and figures, underwent a notable modification for the better. The adjectives, *grand*, *ideal*, *elegant*, *fearful*, and such like, for example, dropped almost entirely out of her daily speech.

Of course, before long, the wedding-presents began to come in. Tillie's delight knew no bounds. Every evening Elias discovered her in an ecstasy over the things that had arrived that day, and joyfully anticipating those that would arrive to-morrow. Some of these presents made the poor fellow groan inwardly. Mr. Blum, for instance, sent an enormous worsted-work picture of Ruth and Boaz, with a charming, though misapplied, inscription cunningly embroidered in gold thread : " Whither thou goest, I will go," etc. Elias knew that this would have to be hung in a conspicuous place in his house ; for, of course, when Mr. Blum came to see them, he would look for it, and, if it wasn't visible, would feel hurt and slighted. Mrs. Blum sent a pair of diamond ear-rings. Tillie at once put them on ; and she never afterward appeared without them ; so that, from this point, whenever she figures upon these pages, the reader will kindly imagine a lustrous solitaire pendent from each of her tiny ears. They were large and handsome ; and Mr. Blum confidentially informed Elias that he had got them at a bargain, but that they had cost him a heap of money all the same.

Neither Mr. Sternberg's parlors, nor Mr. Koch's, were spacious enough to accommodate a tithe of the people who would have to be invited to the wedding ; and therefore it was decided to follow the common Jewish practice, and engage for the occasion a public hall. Mr. Koch engaged the hall of the Advance Club.

There, accordingly, in the afternoon of Monday, the seventh of January, 1884, and in the presence of rather more than three hundred witnesses, Mr. Elias Bacharach and Miss Matilda Morgenthau were pronounced irrevocably man and wife ; the Reverend Dr. Gedaza, assisted by the Reverend Mr. Lewis, as cantor, officiating. The ceremonies were conducted in the strictest orthodox style. The happy couple stood beneath a silken canopy, supported by four young gentlemen designated by the groom ; all the men present covered their heads, some with hats, some with handkerchiefs ; the cantor intoned an invocation, a prayer, a benediction ; the rabbi put the requisite questions, and got the regulation responses, both in Hebrew ; after which, he made a very pretty and touching speech, kissed the bride, and said, " Mrs. Bacharach, accept my heartiest congratulations." The wine, meanwhile, had been spilled and drunken, and the goblet crushed under the bridegroom's heel. For upwards of an hour afterward, there was a wild clamor of talk ; and every body shook hands with Elias, and gave Tillie a kiss. Then they all sat down to dinner. The chazzan chanted a grace. The ban-

queters fell to. By and by toasts were proposed, and harangues delivered. The dancing began at eleven o'clock, and held out until five the next morning.

So they were married.

XIX.

FIRST of all, weakened in body and mind by an epileptic stroke ; then scared literally out of his wits, terrified into a mental and emotional stupor, by the belief that that which we know to have been an epileptic stroke was a visitation from an angry God ; a victim, rather than a villain ; the creature of disease and superstition, of heredity and education ; Elias Bacharach had deserted and forgotten the woman whom he loved, and had allowed himself to be seduced into a marriage with a woman whom he did not love. That a reawakening, accompanied by all the horrors of despair and remorse, should come sooner or later, was, of course, inevitable. It did not come, however, till some nine months after his separation from Christine Redwood, which was some nine months too late.

I have in my possession a quantity of manuscript, in Elias's crabbed handwriting, which gives a deep and clear, though fragmentary, insight into the life he led after his marriage. It is in the form of a long, turbulent, and often hysterical letter, ad-

dressed by him, under circumstances which will in due time be explained, to Christine—a letter, however, which was never sent—and it bears date February, 1885. I have already made one or two quotations from it. I shall avail myself freely of it in the present chapter.

About the relations between himself and Tillie, Elias writes, “there is not much to be said. Our relations were perfectly amicable, but perfectly superficial. Man and wife in name, in reality we were simply good friends ; scarcely that, indeed ; scarcely more than friendly acquaintances. She was invariably bright, cheerful, amiable, unselfish. I tried to do my duty by her, as I conceived it ; to be always kind to her, and to seize every opportunity that I saw to afford her pleasure, or to spare her annoyance. I dare say this was not enough. I dare say she deserved better of me than she got ; that I ought to have striven to be her husband in a more genuine and vital sense of the word. But I did not ; and if, in this way, I sinned against her, it was at least an unintentional sin, a sin of omission, and one which she remained unaware of. I was egotistical and self-centered, as it is my nature to be. She was not at all exacting. If I would listen to her when she talked, and admire her dresses, and enjoy her playing, and take her to the theater or to parties, she was quite contented. She neither asked, nor appeared to expect, any thing further. So that, though we saw each other every day, and were together a good deal of the time, we were as

far as possible from being intimate. Our real, innermost selves never approached each other. In fact, she and my uncle were much more intimate than she and I. He was always having her to sit with him in his study, where he would talk to her of the subjects that interested him, or get her to read aloud to him, or to act as his amanuensis, and write under his dictation. She thought my uncle was a 'perfectly adorable old man'; and he called her 'the light of his declining years.'

"I, meanwhile, lived my own life, such as it was, in silence. But it was not much of a life. It was not especially enjoyable, and it was altogether valueless. I produced nothing, accomplished nothing, was of no earthly use or benefit to anybody in the world—except a sort of convenient appendage to my wife. My favorite occupation—the only one that I cared any thing about—consisted in getting away by myself, and reading. My studio was my castle. Once inside it, with the door closed behind me, I was sure of not being disturbed. I had forsworn my painting, as I fancied, for good and all. I had got utterly discouraged about it, had lost all zest in it, had vowed never to return to it. But up here in my studio I had a lot of books; and here for hours I would sit at the window, reading. My appetite for reading had recently become voracious, insatiable. I can't convey to you an idea of how dependent I was upon my books. They were the world in which I lived, moved, had my being. Away from them, I kept thinking about them, long-

ing to get back to them. Not that I derived so much pleasure from them, but simply that I was unhappy unless I had them. They were to me, I suppose, in my dead-and-alive condition, something like what his drug is to an opium-eater—not so harmful, of course, but just as indispensable : a stimulant, which I could not do without. What the books were, doesn't matter. All sorts, from the latest sensational novel, or wildest exposition of spiritualism, up to Milton and the Bible. Yet, perhaps, I ought to give you the names of some of these books, for some of them produced a very deep and vivid impression upon me, and no doubt contributed more or less to my subsequent state of mind—helped, I mean, to bring it on. Well, I re-read *Wilhelm Meister* ; and I read for the first time Rousseau's *Confessions*, de Musset's *La Confession d'un Enfant du Siècle*, and Browning's *Inn Album* and *The Ring and the Book*, besides many of his shorter poems. I mention these five particularly, because they were the ones that had really strong effects. They stirred me ; pierced to my heart, and *hurt* me ; where other books merely interested or amused me. What I mean is, they appealed to my emotions, where other books merely appealed to my intelligence. Especially Browning. When I read Browning, the exhilaration was almost physical. It was like breathing some vivifying atmosphere, like drinking some powerful elixir. It made me glow and tingle through and through. It was as though the very inmost quick of my spirit had been touched,

and made to throb and thrill. I had never supposed, I would never have believed, that any book could possibly have exerted such a profound and irresistible influence over the reader. My sensation was like an acute pain, that yet somehow verged toward—not pleasure—something deeper and better than pleasure. No music, not even Beethoven's or Wagner's, ever moved me, ever carried me away, as these poems of Browning's did. They literally transfixed me, magnetized me, like the spell of a magician. The reason was, of course, partly because the poetry is in itself so great ; so intense, so penetrating, so vibrant with the living truth, so warm with human blood and passion ; and I don't believe that any man could read it understandingly without being affected by it very much as I was. But the reason was also partly personal. In *The Ring and the Book* I found expressed, in clear, straightforward language, all those deep, strenuous emotions which I myself had experienced in my love of you, which had always groped and struggled for expression, but which to me had always been inexpressible—yearnings which I had felt with all their force and ardor, which I had labored hard to speak, but which I had never been able to speak, any more than as if I had been dumb ; which, pent up in my heart, and straining for an outlet, had sought one by means of broken syllables, glances, caresses. In *The Ring and the Book* I found them expressed ; found my own unutterable secrets uttered. Oh, if only when

you and I were together I had had *The Ring and the Book* to read aloud to you from ! Then, perhaps, I could have made you feel how deeply, utterly, I loved you. In the *Inn Album*, too, another chapter of my own story was told, more of my own secrets were laid bare. The material conditions, the circumstances, the accidentals, to be sure, were totally different ; but the essentials seemed to me the same. A man had irretrievably wronged a woman—a noble, beautiful woman, who loved him and trusted him. A lover had acted basely toward his sweetheart. And there, also, I found an expression for my remorse and my despair. But now I am anticipating. For the present these thoughts had not come to me—the thought of you, and of what had been between you and me, and of how I had wronged you. I mean to say, they had come to me after a fashion ; now and then, spasmodically, by fits and starts ; but they had not pierced more than skin-deep, and they had not taken fast hold. They had come and gone. Later on, they came and staid—like coals burning in my heart. For the present, I did a great deal of reading and scarcely any thinking. Sometimes, it is true, instead of reading, I would sit still, looking out of the window, and carrying on a certain mental process which might perhaps have been called thinking : but it was the sort of thinking known as mooning. I mean it was vague, listless, purposeless ; it had no vigor, no point ; and it bore no result. You, and our love, and the misery I had caused

you, were the subjects of it, yes ; but it was like thinking in a fog. It had not grown intense and clear. It had not crystallized. It awoke in my breast a sort of sluggish, languid melancholy, instead of the pain that I ought to have felt, and by and by did feel—and feel now, and so long as I live shall feel. Whatever there is in me that is not wholly bad and callous, what I suppose would be called my better nature, was just preparing to wake up ; and these were the dull, premonitory throes. I was just beginning to come to myself, out of a long lethargy. My remorse was just beginning to kindle. It had not yet sprung into the white-hot continuous fire that it has since become.”

In another place he says : “ As I write to you now, what I am trying hard to do, is to get at close quarters with the real, bare truth ; to look straight and steadily at it ; and to tell you, as clearly and as calmly as I can, what I see. But the truth is so deep and subtle, though so unmistakable ; and I am so unused to writing ; and it is so hard for me to keep down my feelings, that I can't seem to find the right words. After I have written a sentence, when I come to read it over, it seems almost as though I might as well not have written at all. What I write does not express half clearly, or fully, or forcibly enough what is in my mind. So I can't help fearing that you may not understand. Yet my desire that you *shall* understand is so strong, I am so serious, so much in earnest, I can hardly believe it possible that my words can entirely

fail to show you what I mean. If they should do so, if in this letter I do fail to make you understand, then I will say this : the only purpose that I have left in life will be defeated. That is the only object that I care to live for : to make you understand. Oh, I beg of you, try to understand. I have no right to ask you to do any thing, to expect any kindness, any common mercy even, from you : and yet I do ask, I implore you to read this letter through, and to try to understand what I am trying to express. Not a single line is written which I do not feel in the bottom of my heart. I am striving honestly, with all my might, to strip my soul naked before you. And when what I write seems feeble or obscure, please endeavor to pierce through to the meaning and the feeling of it. You have a kind and pitiful heart ; and if a human being, no matter how low or base, called out to you in great pain to stoop and do a little thing—a little, easy thing—to soothe and relieve him, I know you would do it. Well, that is the way I call out to you now, and beg you to read and try to understand my letter. As I write, I feel like a dumb man, his heart big and sore with something that presses desperately to be spoken, laboring to speak. Well, what I want to make you understand is this. Very slowly and gradually, by imperceptible degrees, a great change was coming over me, was being wrought *in* me. This change was really nothing but a return to health, mental and moral health. Ever since that night on which we were to have

been married, I had been mentally and morally sick—in an unhealthy, unnatural state. My moral nature, and many of my mental faculties, had lain torpid and inactive, as if deadened—had not performed their functions. Well, health was now slowly returning to them, health and vitality. The depths of my spirit—it is a canting phrase, but it expresses exactly what I mean—the depths of my spirit, which had long lain stagnant, were being stirred. I had always comprehended, as a mere intellectual proposition, how much you must have suffered. It was obvious. Dull and half stupefied as I was, I could not help comprehending that. It was like two-and-two-make-four. But the comprehension had got no further than my brain. It had not touched my heart, and made it shudder with horror, and burn with remorse, for my own baseness, and for the agony that I had inflicted upon you, as it has done since. I had comprehended, but I had not felt it. My love of you had been struck dead; and my imagination—or whatever the faculty is, which causes us to sympathize with another's pain—was failing to act. So I had gone about the daily affairs of my life, in no wise troubled or affected by the fact, which I was perfectly aware of, that you, at the same time, in solitude, were suffering the worst sorrow possible in the world—yes, absolutely the worst; I know it. I had gone about, and got what apology for enjoyment, what vulgar amusement, I could, out of life; had eaten, drunken, talked, laughed, read, smoked,

paid calls, listened to music, all precisely as though you did not exist, never had existed ; and finally I had become engaged and married ; and all the while I knew what hopeless, speechless anguish you were enduring, thanks to me ; I knew it, but did not care. Now and then I would think of it ; but so dead was my heart, the thought never aroused a single throe of pain in it. I thought of it on the night of my wedding. In the midst of the dancing, in the midst of the loud, romping merriment, I thought : ‘ What is she doing at this moment ? ’ But it was nothing like sympathy or self-reproach, that prompted me. It was a sense of the curious incongruity. I shrugged my shoulders, said to myself that I could not help it, and went on dancing. This will show you how low I had sunken, how callous I had become ; and you may imagine how I despise myself, how I hate and abhor myself, as I recall it now. Oh, my God ! my God !—Christine, for God’s sake, when you read this, don’t harden against me, because of it, and refuse to read any more. Don’t stop reading. For God’s sake, in mercy to me, go on reading to the end. Don’t close your ears against me, and refuse to listen. The only alleviation of my torments that I have, is the hope that you will read this letter through, and understand how I have repented. . . . Well, as I say, this state of being was now slowly, gradually, changing. Not a day passed now but I would think of you, and of every thing that had been

between you and me, from the beginning to the end ; and now these thoughts did arouse pains in my heart—vague pains, that I did not understand—dull pains, such as one feels in sleep, or while under the influence of an opiate—but still, certainly, pain. As I said before, I was only just beginning to come to myself. My realization of what I had done, of what you had suffered, of what I had made you suffer, had not yet crystallized. My love had not yet waked up. My remorse had not yet got really afire. But all of a sudden, one day, the complete change came. The change was precipitated.

“It was a Friday afternoon late in February, a year ago—dark, rainy, warmish. My wife had gone to the rehearsal at Steinway Hall. I had agreed to meet her in the lobby, at the end, and bring her home. All day long, that day, I had done nothing but mope. I had sat at my studio window looking out into the gray, wet park, or up into the heavy, inky clouds, and giving myself over to the blues—thinking that there was the world, full of interests and activities, the same world that I had used to find so pleasant, and in which I had hoped to work and to be of service, the same world quite unaltered ; and that yet, somehow, unchanged as it appeared to be, it had changed totally for *me*, had lost all its flavor for me, all its attraction for me ; the light, the spirit, had died out of it. I got no pleasure from it. I was of no use in it. I was so much inert, obstructive stuff and lumber. Then,

why did I continue to exist? Neither useful nor happy, what excuse for being had I? Why should I not at once be annihilated and done away with? etc., etc. This was the strain that my mind had been running in all day long. Then, toward five o'clock, I put on my hat and walked around to Steinway Hall to wait for Tillie. It was singular, and even now I can not account for it by any ordinary theory, that, as I stood there in the lobby waiting, while the audience, mostly women, passed out, I was conscious of a strange trembling of the heart, such as one feels in anticipation of some momentous event, such as usually accompanies what we call a presentiment—a presentiment that something portentous for our good or for our evil is about to happen. I could not understand it at all. I could not imagine what it was caused by. And yet, notwithstanding, I could not subdue it. It went on from moment to moment getting more intense; troubling me, perplexing me. I concluded that it must be the wind-up and climax of my blues, just as a dull, dark day sometimes winds up and reaches its climax in a thunder-storm. I said to myself, 'You have not felt any thing like this for nearly a year. This is the sort of thing you used to feel when you were in love—after you had rung Christine's door-bell, while you were waiting and chafing for the door to be opened.' Meantime the audience were pouring out past me, laughing, chatting, greeting their acquaintances, putting up their umbrellas; and I was keeping a look-out for my wife. When,

all of a sudden, my heart, which had been trembling in the way I have described, all of a sudden it gave a great, terrible leap, and then stood stock still ; and I could not breathe nor move, but was literally petrified, rooted to the spot, and felt a fearful pain begin to burn in my breast. For I saw—I saw you. Oh, my God ! I saw you come out of the hall, and move slowly through the lobby, passing within almost a yard of me, so that I could have stretched out my hand and touched you, so that, if I had whispered your name, you would have heard me, and saw you go down the stairs and disappear in the street. I stood there with wide, staring eyes and parted lips, like a man turned to stone. How shall I ever disentangle, and put before you in some sort of consecutive order, the great crowd of thoughts and emotions that suddenly, and all at the same time, broke loose in my heart and brain ? In that brief interval—it could not have been more than a minute altogether—I lived through almost every thing that I have lived through since. It was all compressed into that minute. I shall try hard to give you some sort of an account of it, to make it as clear and as comprehensible as I can. But I know that, however hard I try, I shall only be able to give you a very meager and faint conception. If I could only see you, and speak to you—if for one moment I could kneel down at your feet, and touch your hand, and look into your face, and utter one long, deep sigh—oh, I should feel then as though I had in some degree expressed what was, and has been

ever since, in my heart and mind. Sometimes, when I have listened to certain pieces of music, I have felt that in them was the expression for my unspeakable emotions. I have felt this about some of Chopin's impromptus and nocturnes—that if I could somehow make you hear them, you would somehow understand. Do you know the Impromptu in C-sharp minor? That sometimes seems to express almost perfectly my grief and passion and remorse and hopeless longing. But—but to touch your hand, and look into your eyes, and sob at your feet—I would be willing to die at the end of one minute spent that way. But see—see how I am compelled to sit here, away from you, and realize that never, never, so long as I live, shall I be allowed to approach you, or speak to you. Can you imagine the agony it is, to yearn with your whole soul to speak one word to a woman; to have your whole soul and heart and mind burdened with something that burns like fire, and will never cease burning until you have emptied soul and heart and mind at her feet; and to know that she is scarcely a mile distant from you, in the same city with you; and yet to know that if she were dead she would not be further removed from you, it could not be more impossible for you ever to approach her, ever to speak with her? Can you imagine that? Oh, sometimes I can not believe it—believe that facts can be so inexorable. Sometimes it seems against nature that a man's whole strength, whole life, can be concentrated in one single wish,

and yet the fulfillment of that wish be absolutely beyond hope. It is too stupendous, too monstrous. Oh, to think ! To think that at this very moment you, your own living self, are almost within reach of my voice ! It would not take half an hour to bring me to your side. And once there, once in your actual presence—Oh, my God ! This unceasing agony would be ended, this unutterable agony would be uttered. We two should be together once again—you and I. Oh, the joy, the joy, to sob out all our grief together, and soothe each other's pain ! And yet, if I were at the other extremity of the earth, or if you were dead, it could not be more impossible, I could not be more hopeless. Christine !

“ But there ! I am losing control of myself, crying out and raving in my despair. But what I have set myself to do, is to keep perfectly calm, and, by the aid of all my forces, to try to give you a clear statement of what I have been through. If I ever succeed in making you realize how thoroughly I have understood your pain, how completely I have appreciated the enormity of my own conduct, and how bitterly I have repented it, I shall be almost happy, and I shall have discharged a duty toward you—the only duty that I have a right any more to owe you.

“ Well, now, I tell you that in that one minute—in the time that elapsed from the instant I first caught sight of you, down to the instant when you disappeared in the street below—in that minute, with intensity proportionate to the rapidity, I lived

through nearly every thing that I have lived through since. All my vivid realization of how utterly base I myself had been, and of your unspeakable agony, caused by me, your despair, your humiliation; all my remorse, my yearning to atone for what could never be atoned for, to repair the irreparable wrong that I had done; all my sense of what I had wantonly flung away, and lost beyond recovery; all my despair; in a word, all my love—love that had lain stunned, as I supposed *dead*, but now suddenly had come to, never to let me rest any more: these, and much else that I shall not attempt to reduce to words, these were what sprang upon me all at once, shaking my soul to its foundations, and holding me rigid, horrified, in their grasp. Oh, help me to find an expression for what strains so hard to be spoken. I have just read over what I have written. It sounds vague, cold, formal. If I had left the paper blank, it would have done about as well. What I have written conveys only the weak echo of what I want to say, of what I feel. I stood there in the lobby of Steinway Hall; and I watched you pass under my eyes; and I saw how pale you were, how large and dark and sorrowful your eyes were; and suddenly I knew, I understood, how I, my very self, had made you suffer, you whom I loved, and how never, never, no matter how long I might live, could I in any way do any thing to soothe you, to comfort you, to make up to you for the suffering I had caused you; I knew and understood all this; and my heart went out to you, bounding and burning with a

thousand fierce emotions, with an anguish of remorse and love—oh, my sweet, injured lady beautiful, frail Christine!—and now, now when I try to give you some faint idea of it, I am as helpless to do so, as if I were trying to scream out in a nightmare, and my voice failed me, and my tongue clove to the roof of my mouth. What if I had trampled down all conventional restraints, and then and there, in spite of the crowd, in spite of every thing, had rushed forward and stopped you, and thrown myself upon the ground before you, abasing myself at your feet, and just moaned out loud—letting it all burst forth in one good, deep, satisfying sob? My heart throbs hard at the thought. Yet, of course, I had no right to do it. If I had done it, I should only have relieved myself, at the cost of paining you—you whom, God knows, I have already pained enough. . . . Oh, well, I must try to do my best with pen and ink. Well, as I say, I stood there, breathing heavily, at last, after many months of death, at last alive, I stood there like that, when—when my wife came up, and took my arm, and demanded, startled by my appearance, what the matter was. My wife! And I had just seen you; and my soul was full of you, you whom I had wronged and lost! And here was my wife, taking my arm, speaking to me, emphasizing the antithesis. The past and the present! What I had given up, and what I had got in place of it! After my glimpse of you, the reality—Tillie! Oh, it was

as though a starving man had just seen bread, smelled meat, and then, looking into his own hand, had found a stone there. She took my arm ; and I turned her question as best I could ; and I led her home. Conceive how, as I walked home from Steinway Hall this Friday afternoon, the ghost of a certain other Friday afternoon bore me company. One Friday afternoon, only a little more than a year earlier, in December, 1882, you had gone with me there, to hear the *Damnation of Faust*. Do you remember ? You had sat at my side, close at my side. You had looked into my eyes, had touched my arm, had spoken to me. The sweetness of the rose that you wore in your bosom, had filled my nostrils. For one instant, one delirious instant, your breath, your very breath, had fallen upon my cheek ! You had allowed me to wrap you in your cloak, when you felt a draught—in the fur circular you used to wear ; I remember the faint perfume that always clung to it. We were so intimate, so confidential, you and I ! You were happy. And I loved you ; and I had the possibility of winning your love open before me. And now ! God, to think that the possibility which that afternoon held safe in store for me, had been used and wasted ! To think that by no remaining possibility it could ever be won back ! Every thing was destroyed. I myself, by my own voluntary act, had destroyed every thing—even hope. Well, well, my wife and I walked home. My brain and my heart were burning. Chaos was let loose in them. I wanted to scream

out, to beat my breast, to rend my garments. But I had, instead, to put on an indifferent face, exchange commonplaces with her, take her home ; and, it being Sabbath by this time, had to join in the praying and the Scripture-reading, and all that. Of course, I was eager, wild, to get away, by myself. But I had to sit it out with the family—my wife, her mother, my uncle—till ten o'clock that night. I was pretty nearly beside myself. But at last I escaped, and got into my studio. There is no use my writing about that night, the night I passed alone up here in my studio—alone with you ; for, so intense was my thought of you, you were all but palpable at my side. I had given you back, as I supposed, all your letters—every keepsake I had to connect me with the past. But this night, as the reward of much ransacking, I found in the drawer of my desk the very first note you had ever written me, the one in which you said you would go with me to the exhibition. Do you remember ? How we walked up and down the galleries ? And how you leaned upon my arm ? And the little red bonnet that you wore ? And how, afterward, we went to Delmonico's ? That little note, ever since, has been the most precious of all my possessions. Your own hand traced these letters ! Your own breath fell upon this paper ! What effect it had upon me that night, I shall not attempt to tell you. Think of this : it still kept a faint trace of its fragrance—of the sweet smell it had had, when you first sent it to me. That *that*

should have remained, that immaterial, evanescent perfume! That *that* should have outlasted the rest! No; there is no use of my writing a line about that night. I should only be incoherent, if I tried. All I will say is this: if you had cared about revenge, and had witnessed my suffering that night, you would have been satisfied."

Still elsewhere, he goes on as follows: "Christine, what I want to say to you is very simple. I don't understand why I should have so much difficulty in saying it, why every attempt I make at saying it should be such a wretched failure. I suppose it is because, when I bring my mind to bear upon it, when I look it squarely in the face, it appalls me so, I get so excited, my feelings get so wrought up, that I lose the self-command which a man must retain, in order to express himself clearly and fully with his pen. It is as if, instead of saying what I have to say, fluently and directly, I were to falter, and stammer, and gasp forth inarticulate, unmeaning sounds. If only the impossible were not impossible; if only the hopeless were not hopeless; if for one minute I could stand in your presence, alone with you, and look into your eyes, and touch your hand, and speak one word to you—just call you by your name, Christine!—or, no, not even do that, not even speak, but simply stand there silent, and look at you: then, I feel sure that somehow you would understand, and then I could find something like peace. You would understand by instinct, by in-

tuition, what my mind and heart are full of. If such a meeting might only come to pass ! But I do not delude myself. I know that it never can come to pass—never, not if we go on living in the same city for fifty years. Constant and intense as my longing to see you is, fiercely as my heart beats at the thought of meeting you, I know that I might as well long to see, think of meeting, one who is dead. I am a married man, and have no right to seek to see you. But even if I were not a married man, you, whose scorn and hatred of me must be bottomless, you would spurn me, you would refuse, shuddering, to look at me, or to listen to me. I know it. Even if you ever, in your holy goodness and mercy, can forgive me in some degree for what I have done, I know you never can forgive me enough to let me approach you, to let me speak to you by word of mouth. The mere idea of meeting me, I suppose, must always be full of horror for you. I can never atone for the wrong I have done you. I can never even tell you of my remorse, and beseech your forgiveness, except by writing. So I write, begging you, in charity, to read and to try and get my meaning. If it were not for the hope that you will read this letter through, I believe my agony would drive me mad. This hope is the only thing that mitigates it, and makes it bearable.

“ Well, then, here is the simple truth, told as simply as, by my utmost effort, I can tell it. For a period of some months, I had been in a condition

which you must let me compare roughly to somnambulism—a sort of daze, a dull, half-waking trance. While in that condition, a great number of my mental and moral faculties had lain absolutely dormant—just as much so, as if I had not possessed them. From that unconscious fit into which I fell on the night of our wedding, I had never perfectly recovered. My body had recovered, yes, and a part of my mind—the every-day, working part. But the rest of my mind, the *better* part of it, had never emerged from the coma which it sank into then. And during this period, I want to say, I do not think I was, in the ordinary sense, responsible for what I did. I was mentally responsible: that is, I knew what I was doing, and I chose to do it. But I was not exactly morally responsible, because morally I was blind. My moral sense—my heart and conscience, I mean, were in a state of suspended animation; and I acted without their guidance. I don't say this with a view to excusing myself. I say it, because I honestly believe that it is true, and because, to some extent, it accounts for my otherwise unaccountable way of acting. Well, let me call it somnambulism. Then, on that Friday afternoon, when I so unexpectedly caught sight of you in the lobby of Steinway Hall, there, at that instant, all of a sudden, I woke up; I came to my senses, in heart and mind was my complete self again. And awaking in this way, getting my moral eyes opened, my moral faculties into running order, I then for the first time,

saw, realized, understood, what, while in that irresponsible, somnambulistic state, I had done. Dumbfounded, aghast, I saw the ruin I had wrought—ruin of your life, your world, and of mine—total, hopeless ruin. I have read of a man who dearly loved his wife, and who, one night, in his sleep, got up and murdered her. When he awoke next morning, and found her lying dead beside him, and made the horrible discovery that he himself had done it—well, he must have felt a little as I felt after I had seen you that day at Steinway Hall. And the worst of it—the aspect of it which was most unbearable, most infuriating—was this knowledge, that loomed up before me, as big and as unalterable as a mountain of granite: the knowledge that what I had done could never be undone; that the desolation to which I had reduced our world, could never be repaired; that, no matter how bitter my remorse was, no matter how poignant my regret, I could never atone for the wrong I had committed, never could win back again the treasure I had thrown away. It was a mountain of granite, I say, against which, frantically, with all my puny strength, I dashed myself; thereby making no impression, but falling back, bruised, stunned, disheartened. My knowledge now of your suffering, my knowledge of how I had made you suffer, and that, though my whole life yearned toward you with tenderness, love, contrition, unutterable, I never in all my life could do the slightest, smallest thing toward making amends

to you, toward soothing the pain, healing the wounds, that I had inflicted upon you—upon you, my pale, sweet lady—oh, I ask you to imagine how heavily that knowledge weighed upon my spirit, how sharp its clutch was, how it would never let me rest, never allow me a moment of forgetfulness, but clung constantly and grimly, a monster with which it would be futile for me to hope to struggle. That last meeting between us, when you came here to my studio, to this very room, to the room I am writing in now, and I here, in my uncle's presence, threw you down and trampled upon you, and allowed him to lead you away, crushed and bleeding—that last meeting, when I still had it in my power to spare you all that shame and sorrow, to take you in my arms, and quiet all your pain, and kiss away all your fear, and to *keep* you—keep you for myself—oh, you may imagine how my memory of that meeting, my realization of how I had hurt and humiliated you, my recognition of the wasted possibilities it had held, would not out of my heart, but abode there all the time, eating into it like acid. The walls and ceiling of the room, which had been witnesses of that last meeting, seemed eternally to be crying it out at me. When I looked at the floor, it was as if I saw a blood-stain there where you had stood. Oh, to think that there for one long minute you did really stand, you yourself, within arm's-reach of me; and I might have put out my hand, and touched you, and taken hold of you, and kept you to me forever, but did not! To think that

I let you go ; and you went ; and I did not call you back ! Oh, God, if I had only come to my senses soon enough to have called you back ! But no, no ; you went ; and there was an end of it all. Love, happiness, hope, all went out with you. I drove you out. I drove them out. Christine, for every single pain that I inflicted upon you at that meeting, I ask you to believe, I have never ceased to pay with the acutest anguish that I am capable of feeling. That spot on my floor where you stood—ah, God, how many thousand times have I kissed it since ! Ah, God, if there were only some power in earth or heaven that could bring you back there, make you stand there, again, for just one minute more ! And it was I—I, whose soul goes out to you with an immensity of love that I can not find words for—— I, who would give all the rest of my life for the privilege of caressing and comforting you for a single instant—I, whose place it was to shield you and protect you—I myself, who drove you away from here, heart-broken, never to return. Oh, my beautiful, pale darling ! Christine, lost, lost forever ! Here am I, my heart bursting with the desire to be, in some way, of some sort of service to you ; and there are you, needing perhaps some little service : and yet if we were upon different planets, it could not be more impossible for me ever to lift my finger in your aid ! Oh, I say, it is infuriating. It is too much. Oh, if I could tear open my breast, and let you look in, and see !—see the love, the remorse, the despair, that are stirring

in perpetual fever there. . . . Oh, the misery I caused you ! The long, hateful days that you had to drag through afterward, while I was amusing myself, dining out, learning to dance, getting engaged and married ! Far and wide, as far as your eye could see, the world, which had been a fair and fragrant garden in your sight, had crumbled suddenly to a bleak waste of dust and ashes. The hand that you loved had dealt you a blow worse than a death-blow. You had entrusted your happiness to me, and I had betrayed my trust ; had taken it, and deliberately dashed it to the ground, and shattered it beyond possibility of mending. My frail, beautiful lady. Yes, if I had stabbed you with a knife, I should not have been so brutal, so base, so cruel ; your pain would not have been so great ; I should have less to reproach myself with to-day. Yes, I know it."

But, the reader may curiously ask, how about his theology ? his belief that it had been the act of heaven ? This question he touches upon only incidentally, and disposes of briefly : " In the light of my resuscitated love, the mere remembrance of that blasphemous delusion filled me with loathing for myself—made me shudder, and draw back, sickened. It was a monstrous lie. I can not bring myself to write about it." And on another page, he says : " My superstition was the dragon, whose breath poisoned our joy, withered our world, burned out our hearts. The dragon was

killed at last, but too late—after its ravages had been accomplished, after it had done its worst.”

I may seize this opportunity, also, to request that if Elias is not always so scrupulous about his syntax and rhetoric as one might wish, the reader will charitably pardon him, in view of the high degree of mental excitement under which he is manifestly laboring.

“Well,” he continues, “after this reawakening, what of my life? Externally my life went on precisely as before. I was married. I had married of my own free will. I knew that, however detestable my marriage might now have become to me, I was bound in all honor and decency not to do any thing that could make my wife unhappy. I had already done mischief enough in the world. I must not, if I could help it, do any more. I must keep my secret. Though all the forces of my body and soul were sucked up and concentrated in that one fierce secret, as they were, I must not let it appear. So, the relations between my wife and myself went on precisely as before; and I tried to be a good husband to her, and to give her what pleasure, and spare her what pain, I could. The same theaters, dinners, parties; the same talk about dresses, the same piano playing. Sometimes, even while, with as much nonchalance of manner as I could master, I was listening to her prattle, my secret would be burning so hot in my breast, it was a wonder to me that she did not guess it, or suspect it—that she did not *feel*

it. Sometimes, even while I was directly speaking to her, answering some question that she had asked me, or what not, my heart was being wrung by such strong emotions, it seemed as though she could not help but divine them. It was hard work, keeping this constant guard over myself, wearing this mask. But, of course, I was in duty bound to wear it. The relief was immense when I could get away by myself, and let it drop off. Away by myself, I could, any how, *be* myself—lead my own life, without dissembling.

“My own life—what was it like? Well, outwardly it was a life of silence and inaction. My real life was an inward life—lived in my own heart. My heart was like a furnace. Shut up there, my love, my remorse, my despair at the past, my hopelessness of the future, a hundred nameless, restless, futile fears and longings, burned steadily all day long from day to day. Sometimes one emotion would be paramount, sometimes another. Sometimes memory would take possession of me; and, seated at my studio window, with my one relic of you clasped in my hand, I would go back, and live over again all that had passed between us, from the day when I first saw you, down to the day when, in this same room, I had put you from me. Do you remember that day—the day I first saw you? Do you remember our first speech together? And how awkward I was? and embarrassed? Do you remember the night of the party—New Year’s Eve—when the heel of your slipper broke off? And how

jealous I was? And how angry you got with me? And how you scolded me? And then—in the carriage, going home? Do you remember your birthday? and mine? The silk handkerchief you embroidered for me with my initials? The concerts we used to go to together? and the little suppers afterward? The books we read together? *Detmold*? *The Portrait of a Lady*? The poems you were so fond of? The letters we used to write to each other, even when we were going to see each other the very same day? Or, perhaps, instead of sitting still here at my studio window, I would leave the house, and go for a walk in the old places—the places that were associated with our love, and now for me were sorrowfully consecrated by it. I would walk up Eighth Avenue, over the ground that I had used to cover every time I went to see you; would cross the great circle at Fifty-ninth Street; would come within eye-shot of your door, look up at your window, recall the time when I had had right of entrance, wonder what you were doing now; would enter the park, and even seek out our pine-trees, and stay for a while there in their shadow—there, where—! Do you remember? You may imagine whether this was bitter-sweet. To go back to the time when you had been mine, wholly mine, and live over all the rapture of that time, in all its minute, intimate details; and then, with an infinite hunger for you gnawing in my heart, to return to the present, look into the future, and realize that I, by my own act, had let you go, had lost you

forever ! You may imagine with what woe and fury, deep and frantic, and yet dumb, I would recall and repeat to myself that verse of Rossetti's poetry : ' Could we be so now ? ' And there was the truth, the relentless truth, for me to confront, and reconcile myself to, if I could : ' Not if all beneath heaven's pall lay dead but I and thou, could we be so now ! ' The truth which, as I said, was like a mountain of granite, separating you and me. Oh, but at other times I could not believe that the truth *was* the truth. It was too cruel. It was incredible. It must be some hideous hallucination—some nightmare, that I should sooner or later wake up from. I could not believe that it was in the possible order of nature for a man and a woman to have loved each other as you and I had loved each other, and yet to have become so utterly lost to each other as it now seemed that we were ; for two human lives to have been so perfectly fused together, blended together like two colors upon my palette, and yet afterward to have become so completely rent asunder. I could not believe it possible for my soul to yearn toward you and thirst for you constantly, as it did, and yet be debarred forever from any sort of communion with you. It seemed as though somehow, sometime, somewhere, we *must* come together—you and I once more !—and all our sorrow be swept away by the great joy of our reunion. Oh, Christine, if it might be so ! If only it might be so ! At these moments my imagination would break the bonds of reason and fly off in day-

dreams, long, delicious flights of fancy, visiting wondrous air-castles where you and I dwelt together—only shortly to drop back upon the awful reality. The reality : I married, and all your love for me, your priceless love for me, by my fault, turned to horror and hatred. And yet, in spite of the reality, in the very teeth of it, I would think : ‘Well, what if my wife should die?’ As long as I am telling you the truth, I may as well tell you the whole truth, no matter how bad it may make you think I am. Yes, I would say : ‘What if my wife should die?’ And then I would repeat to myself what you had once said about that very same verse of Rossetti’s poetry : ‘I can’t understand why it should be so absolutely hopeless. If they really were all alone together, and she saw how dreadfully he had suffered, I don’t understand how she could help forgiving him and loving him again.’ And then, for an instant my heart would bound with something like hope. But only for an instant. As soon as my reason could make itself heard, I would acknowledge that I had sinned too much ever to expect forgiveness from you. No, it would be past human nature. . . . At still other times my uppermost feeling would be simply an intense desire to see you—not for any special purpose, not with a view to speaking to you—simply a craving for the sight of your face. I felt that if I could only look upon you for an instant, catch one brief glimpse of you, I should have something to remember and cherish, something for my heart to feed upon, which

was feeding upon itself. It would be an agony. I knew that. The mere thought of it was that. But it would also be the nearest approach to a joy that I could expect. So, in the hope that I might see you, I would stand for hours on the corner of your street, in the snow, in the rain, in the hot sun or cold wind, watching the door of your house, waiting for you to pass in or out—very much as, in the old times, I would watch the door of a house where I knew that you were visiting, and wait to join you at your exit. (Do you remember? And how surprised you always used to be?) But I was always disappointed. I never once saw you. I would walk, also, in those quarters of the city where ladies throng to do their shopping; always searching for one face in the crowd, but never finding it. And I haunted regularly the rehearsals at Steinway Hall and at the Academy of Music, closely watching the audience as it passed out, always hoping that my experience of that afternoon in February might be repeated, invariably getting my labor for my pains. Where did you keep yourself? Oh, sometimes I felt that I positively could not live without a sight of you. I was starving for a sight of you. Only to see you for one little moment! Only to feed my heart with one brief glimpse of you! That did not seem such a greedy or unreasonable desire. It could do you no harm, provided I were careful not to *be* seen, as well as to see; and I meant to be careful about that. It could do no living creature harm; and to

me—oh, to me it would be like a drop of water to a man consumed by thirst. Then my wish would become the father of my thought. I would say : ‘Surely, if I go out now, and scour the city, visiting every spot that in any possibility she may visit—the shops, the park, Fourteenth Street, Twenty-third Street—surely, at some point our paths will cross each other, and I shall see her.’ Well, I would go out. I would give my thought a trial. I would walk the streets till I was fagged out and foot-sore. I would come back home, with a heart sick for hope deferred What fears tormented me all this time, you will surely be able to conceive for yourself. How could I know but that you might have died ? One morning at the breakfast-table my uncle glanced up from his newspaper, and, looking very queerly at me, said, ‘Here, Elias, here’s news for you. An old friend of yours is dead.’ With a horrible, sick heart-leap, I thought : ‘Ah, she is dead.’ With as indifferent an air as I could put on, I asked, ‘Who?’ He handed me the paper, pointing to the death notices. It cost me all my strength to look ; but I looked. Yes ; there I saw your name, Redwood. With the courage of despair, I read the notice. No ; it was not you ; it was your father. But how could I know—what assurance had I—that you had not died, too, without my chancing to learn of it ? The thought that you might have, got to be a fixed idea in my brain. There was no way by which I could find out. I knew nobody to whom I could

apply for information. But at last, one day, by accident, in looking through a newspaper, I again caught sight of your name, Redwood. Ah, how the sight of it made my temples throb ! I read that you had been appointed a teacher in the Normal College. So, my doubts on the score of your death were set at rest. It may seem strange to you that I should care so much whether you live or die, since already you are as far and as hopelessly removed from me, as if you were dead ; yet the thought that you may die is the blackest of all thoughts to me. I don't know why it is, but I feel that so long as you remain in it, the world will not be quite a blank wilderness to me. There is still some warmth, some beauty, in the light of day, which would go out utterly if you were to die. So long as you live, *I* want to live. It seems as though there were something to live for ; though I can't tell what. But if you were to die—oh, God ! if she were to die ! I pray God to put an end to my life at once. Oh, don't die, Christine. Oh, to think that if you were to die, I might not hear of it, and might go on living ! To think that I can do nothing to make life worth living for you ! Nothing to protect you from the danger of death ! To think that if you were lying on a sick bed, and I knew it, I could do nothing to soothe you, to nurse you back to health ! Oh, Christine ! Oh, God grant that at least we may both live until I have finished this letter, and you have read it ! I must not die, you must not die, until I have finished, and you have

read, this letter Once in a great while, once in six or eight weeks, or even seldomer, I would dream about you. These dreams were the one luxury of my life, being, as they were, the one means of escape from my life ; reversing, as they did, the real truth of my life. Every night, when I lay down to sleep, I would think to myself : ' Perhaps to-night I shall dream of her. She will come to me in my dream.' These dreams always annihilated the recent past, and carried me back to our happy days. You were mine again, with me again. All was as it had been. My lost treasure was for a brief space restored to me. The great joy that I experienced in these dreams, I can not describe. It was boundless, unspeakable. Of course, to wake up in the morning, and realize that it had only been a dream, was hard. To wake up, and look around me, and see the walls of my bedroom, the view from my window, and breathe the air, and listen to the sounds, of the morning, all quite unchanged, just as they had used to be in the old time ; and then to think how completely all the rest was changed—changed beyond possibility of retrieval—you and your love lost to me forever—that was hard enough. It was like a famished man dreaming of food, and waking up to find a stone in his hand. And yet—and yet, so great was the rapture of them, while they lasted, my dreams were worth purchasing at almost any price ; certainly, at the price of the pain of waking. To see you, to speak to you, to touch you ; to be spoken

to, and touched, by you ; to hold your little, soft, warm hand in mine, to hear the music of your laughter, to breath the fragrance that the air caught from your presence, to gaze into the depths of your eyes, even though in a dream—it was better than nothing, wasn't it? Better than never, dreaming or waking, to see you at all. So, as I say, every night I would hope to dream of you—notwithstanding the thought that perhaps I had no right to dream of you, that you perhaps would begrudge me the possession of you, even in my dreams ; but, as I say, my hope was rewarded very seldom—not oftener than once in every six or eight weeks. This was strange, seeing that you absorbed my mind constantly, all day long, every day.

“I believe I called my life purposeless and hopeless ; but it was not exactly this. One purpose and one hope, each forlorn enough, I clung to. They furnished the only light that I could see, as I looked forward into the future. The same hope and purpose that animate me now, as I write. I purposed and I hoped, sometime, by some means, to let you know—to let you know what I have been trying to let you know by all this writing ; how thoroughly I had appreciated my own brutality and baseness, how intensely I had realized your suffering, and how my heart was devoured by remorse, despair, and love. This desire to let you know, was the one constant desire that never left me. It was like an extreme thirst, that would not let me rest till I had satisfied it. I

could not understand it. Even now I do not understand it. What good could it do either you or me? No good to you, surely; for the most that you can possibly care about, in regard to me, is to be let alone, and allowed to forget me. And what good to me? Would it give you back to me? Would it allay my remorse? Not unless it could undo the past, and blot out the pain I had caused you. Would it rekindle your love? I might as well expect, by my touch, to raise the dead, as ever, by any means, to rekindle your love. Would it even win for me your forgiveness? I knew that it was not within the capacity of human nature, ever really, from the bottom of the heart, without a reservation, to forgive such wrong as I had done to you. This was what my reason said; and yet, despite all this, I felt—and still feel, and can not help feeling—that somehow I ought to let you know, that it was only right to let you know. I longed to let you know. That is the substance of it. I longed to let you know; and my longing defied my reason, just as hunger defies reason. If I could only let you know, it seemed as though both you and I should then be able to find something like peace and repose. My soul ached to unbosom itself before you; and all reasoning to the contrary notwithstanding, my instincts told me that you, as well as I myself, would be happier—at least, less unhappy—afterward. It was as though I had something big and heavy in my heart, that pressed to be got out; that would strain and rack

my heart until it *was* got out ; and that could only *be* got out by letting you know. I suppose this is always the way, when a man's heart is full of conscious guilt. But how to let you know ? Oh, my impulses answered at once. They said : ' Seek her out. Kneel down before her. Look into her face. Touch her hand. Give it vent—let it all burst forth—in one good, long, satisfying sob ! Then, she will understand. She will understand what is too deep, too passionate, for any speech. Her heart and yours will be at rest. This anguish will be relieved.' Oh, how my temples throbbed, how my breath quickened, how my whole spirit thrilled, as I allowed myself to shape that thought. You, my frail darling, whom I had hurt so ! You, my sweet rose-lady, whom I had torn, and crushed, and made to bleed ! Christine, pale, sad Christine ! To spend one moment weeping at your feet, trying a little to soothe and comfort and console you, to atone a little for the sorrow I had caused you, to pour out my love and my remorse before you ! Oh, good God ! But of course, of course, I knew that I might as well hope to speak with one who was dead. I, a married man, had no right, even in my own secret thoughts, to wish for such a meeting between you and me. And you, despising me, you would fly from me, you would never permit me to draw near to you. And yet, it is so hard to reconcile one's self to the truth, even when one can have no doubt about it, I would go on hoping, in spite of the hopelessness,

in spite of the fact that I had no right to hope—hoping that somehow the impossible might come to pass. But at the same time, I would think : ‘ How else ? Is there any other way ? ’ Necessarily, it occurred to me to write. But the idea of writing was repugnant. I never could tell the half of what I had to tell by writing ; and then, what assurance had I that you would read my letter ? (What assurance have I, even now ?) So, for the time being, I put the plan of writing out of my head ; and went back, and asked again : ‘ How else ? ’ Was there no possible method by which I could let you know what weighed so heavily, so heavily, upon my mind ? Sometimes the most absurd notions would seize hold of me, with all the force of realities. For a little while, this would become not merely a theory, as of a thing conceivable, but a conviction, as of a thing actual ; that, thinking of you as constantly and as intently as I did, by some occult means in nature, my spirit was enabled to transcend the limitations of space and matter, and to reach yours, and to communicate with it. For hours at a stretch, I would sit here at my studio window, harboring this delicious fancy : that now, at this very moment, by the operation of some subtle psychic force, you were receiving the message which my heart was sending you. I had read of such things in wonder-tales, even in serious pseudo-scientific treatises. Why might there not be something in them ? But, as I have said, only for a little while could a fancy like this hold its place. In a

little while my common-sense would assert itself, and bring the dismal truth looming up again stark before me. All of a sudden, one day, I thought of my painting. It made my pulse leap. It seemed like an inspiration. I would paint a picture which—if you saw it; and if I sent it to the exhibition, you would very likely see it—which would tell you the whole story. In a fever of impatience to get the picture begun, and without having stopped to determine what the picture was to be, I procured canvas, paints, brushes. Then I paused, and asked: ‘But what shall I paint?’ It did not require much thinking, to make the futility of the whole design clear to me. Unless I could tear my heart out, and paint *it*, with all the fierce passions fermenting in it, I might as well not paint any thing at all. Now, at last, you see, I have returned to my former plan of writing. I have done so, in despair of any other means, and because it is no longer possible for me to hold back. I have held back until I am tired out, worn out. I have been writing at this letter, from time to time, during the past fortnight. To-day is Friday, February 13th. I have much left to say. As soon as it is finished, I shall send it to you.”

“As soon as it is finished!” It was never finished. Events now supervened, which interrupted it, and prevented its completion. Those events, it will be my business, in the concluding chapters of this story, to relate.

XX.

WHEN Elias professed to recognize that, no matter how detestable his marriage might now have become to him, he was bound in all honor and decency to do nothing that could make his wife unhappy, he certainly, so far as he was conscious of his own intentions, meant what he said. Of his free will, he had married a perfectly innocent woman. He must not allow the burden of his guilt to bear in the slightest degree upon her shoulders. He must abide exactly by the letter, and, to the best of his ability, by the spirit, of his marriage vows. He purposed to do so ; and, so far as he had fathomed it, his purpose was honest and earnest. Yet, at the same time, inevitably, his life at home galled and irked him more than a little. His daily association with Tillie, with Mrs. Morgenthau, and with the rabbi, was both irritating and enervating. He had constantly, as he put it, to wear a mask ; to sham, to play a part, to act a lie. He had to counterfeit emotions and interests which he was very remote from feeling, and to conceal with utmost, unflagging vigilance those that actually dominated his heart. He had to pretend to be cheerful and sympathetic. He had to keep the one vital reality of his existence closely locked down, a secret prisoner in his breast. Shamming, through practiced in a laudable cause, is, as those who have tried it can testify, a sufficiently sorry

and thankless business. Elias sickened of it. The never-relaxing guard that he was obliged to maintain over himself, on the perpetual *qui-vive* lest by some momentary inadvertence he should betray himself, wearied and discouraged him. He became impatient, restive. In certain moods, he would reflect : “ It is a part of my punishment. I have brought it upon myself. I deserve it. I must submit to it unrebellingly, in silence.” But Elias was not by temperament a Spartan ; and more frequently, longing ardently for respite, he would cry : “ If only for a little while I could escape ! If only I could go away, and, in solitude, for a little while, give the rein to my own true self—live my own true life, without this eternal necessity of suppression and deceit ! ” The actor wanted to withdraw for a moment out of view, behind the scenes, there, for a moment, to drop his stage-smile and stage-manner. Not unnaturally, it may be conceded. But the question was one of method. How ? Consistently with his resolution not to make his wife unhappy, how could it be done ? Gradually a plan, simple of conception, and easy of execution, got shaped in Elias’s mind. The plan itself, to be sure, involved a certain amount of falsehood ; but falsehood which, Elias concluded, was innocuous, and, under the circumstances, justifiable.

On Monday, February 16, 1885, at the breakfast table, he made the following announcement to the persons there assembled : “ To-morrow I am

going out of town. I am going down into the country on Long Island, to do a little winter landscape painting. I shall be gone perhaps a week, perhaps a fortnight."

No opposition was offered. Such questions as were asked, he had anticipated, and so answered with consummate glibness. Next morning a carriage drew up before the door. Elias, with his trunk and his traps, got into it, and was driven off. As the carriage turned the corner, he could see Tillie lingering on the stoop, looking after him. His conscience smote him gently for an instant; and he renewed his vow never to do any thing that could bring sorrow upon his wife. "Poor, little, light-hearted thing," he soliloquized. "It is easy to satisfy her—'pleased with a rattle, tickled with a straw.'" And then he dismissed her from his mind. It is probable that, so long as he lived, he never once thought of her again.

"I don't know why it is," the light-hearted and easily satisfied Tillie, as she re-entered the house, confessed to her mother, "but I feel just as blue as if he had gone away forever, instead of only for a fortnight. I feel just perfectly wretched. I've been feeling bad enough for ever and ever so long; but this is just the last straw. I don't believe he cares for me the least bit in the world." And she buried her face in her mother's bosom, and had a good, long cry.

Elias's carriage drove neither to a railway-station, nor to a steamboat-pier. It drove to a lofty, red-

brick apartment-house (for bachelors), in West Forty-second Street, "The Reginald," where Elias had hired a furnished suite of rooms by the month. The falsehood involved by his plan had consisted in saying that he was going to the country. He had no idea of quitting the city. Just so long as Christine Redwood remained in New York, New York would be the only habitable spot on earth to Elias Bacharach.

The clerk of the apartment-house conducted Elias to his quarters, and left him there.

Elias locked his door behind the clerk. Then, suddenly, he flung himself full length upon the floor, and gave vent to a great sigh of relief. At last he was alone, all alone, and free. At last he had got clear of the disguise, which, like a strait-waistcoat, he had been compelled to wear for upwards of a year. I don't know how long he continued to lie there upon the floor. I don't know how many times he sobbed out her name: "Christine! Christine! Christine!"

Finally, however, he rose to his feet, brushed off and smoothed down his clothing, and descended to the office of the establishment, where he had some business to transact with the proprietor. Afterward, he meant to go for a walk, and feast his eyes for a while upon the house in which she dwelt. He knew this house very well. It was in Forty-eighth Street, between Sixth and Seventh Avenues. Many and many a time, during the past few months, he had gone there, after nightfall, and watched the

lights glow in the windows, and wondered which of the lights was hers. By day, he never approached nearer than the nearest corner. He did not wish to be seen by her. He conjectured that the sight of him might distress her. Now, he meant, after finishing his business with the proprietor, to go and stand on that corner for a while, and enjoy the luxury of staring at the chocolate-colored façade of her dwelling-house.

He found the proprietor engaged in conversation with a gentleman. He took a position, therefore, at a respectful distance, and waited till their colloquy should end. He paid no heed to the gentleman's appearance; but afterward he recalled him vaguely as tall, fair-complexioned, rather athletic-looking, and presumably in the neighborhood of thirty years of age. Pretty soon the gentleman put on his hat, and left the room.

"Did you notice that party I was talking with?" the proprietor inquired of Elias.

"Not especially," Elias replied. "Why?"

"Handsome chap, and one of the whitest in this town. Civil Engineer, of the name of Hosmer—R. E. Hosmer. Got an office down in the Astor House. He's lived here with me going on three years. But this is his last day. To-morrow he gets married."

"Ah?" returned Elias, with a perfunctory affectation of interest.

"Yes, sir, gets married, and sets up house-keeping. So I lose him; and I'm mighty sorry to, I can

tell you. He's a gentleman, from the word go. But he's caught a stunning pretty girl for a wife, now, and don't you forget it. He had her here one night, along with some friends, to dinner ; and he took me up, and introduced me to her. She's what I call a daisy, straight out. Well, sir, to-morrow morning they're going to be married ; and he said he'd have invited me to the wedding, only it's strictly private. No admittance except on business, you understand. No guests ; nothing. Well, that's all right, I suppose, if people like it that way. No law against it, any how. But you see, I wanted to send her some sort of a little present, being so friendly with him, you understand ; and so I thought awhile, and finally I got this." (The proprietor went to his safe, and, coming back in a minute, exhibited a necklace of amber beads.) "I got this. Tidy, ain't it? But do you know, I'll be hanged if I hadn't forgotten to ask him for her address, until just this instant. There's time yet, however ; and I'll send it up by one of the boys right away. Let's see. Ah, yes ; here it is. He wrote it out on this envelope."

Elias took the envelope which his communicative landlord offered him, and glanced indifferently at it. In large, clear letters, was written :

"MISS CHRISTINE REDWOOD,

"No. — West 48th Street,

"City."

Elias did not start, nor exclaim, nor indeed make any sign by which an observer could have

guessed that what he had just read had been of any special import to him. He turned perhaps a little pale. Perhaps his lips twitched a little. Perhaps his attitude assumed a certain rigidity. But it was with an air of perfect composure that he said to the proprietor, "Oh, by the way, I forgot something. I must go back to my room. The matter I wanted to speak to you about—I'll be down again about it, later." With an air of perfect composure; for, at this moment, like a man who has been shot, Elias was conscious of very little, save a sudden daze and bewilderment. He knew in a dull way that something serious had happened to him. There had been, all at once, a shock, a thrill that pierced and transfixed him; and then had come a strange stunned feeling; and now—now, he must get away, by himself, back in his own room, at once.

He entered the elevator, and was carried upstairs.

Automatically, he heard the elevator-man say: "Fine day, sir."

Automatically, he responded, "Yes."

"But cold. Coldest of the season, I guess. Below zero, sir."

"Indeed."

"Well, here you are, sir. Sixth."

"Thanks."

Automatically, he stepped out of the elevator, and found his way through the corridor to his door. Automatically, he unlocked the door, passed it, locked it behind him. But then, of a sudden, his

strength deserted him, his sensations rushed upon him, and overpowered him. He dropped upon the first chair he came to, and sat there, all huddled up, and staring blindly, like a drunken man. Indeed, it was not unlike a drunken man that he felt. He felt deathly sick. He felt an oppression upon his lungs, and had to labor hard for his breath. His head sagged forward heavily upon his chest; his brain went spinning furiously round and round. His ears rang. A blackish, half-opaque mist hung before his eyes, in which the objects about him swam dimly, bewilderingly, to and fro. The house seemed to be rocking on its foundations. In his breast — something — a lump, big and hot, like a coal of fire — was struggling frantically, in spasmodic leaps, as if to break away, and get outside. At one instant he thought it would choke him; it had sprung up into his throat. Again, he thought it would rend his very bone and flesh asunder, with such force it dashed itself against the walls that shut it in. Then, for another instant, it fell back, and was quiet; but then he thought it would burn him up, with its intense, angry heat. Liquid fire went circling through his veins, scalding them, and causing the uttermost parts of his body to throb and tingle.

So, for it may have been a half hour, he sat there upon that chair, limp, motionless, like one stricken impotent and senseless by too much wine. In the end, however, all at once, as if stung, he sprang up, and began striding wildly, with unsteady gait, back

and forth across his floor. He moaned aloud. Sometimes he would wring his hands together. Sometimes he would press them to his temples. By and by he began to talk to himself. His voice was husky, his articulation indistinct. His words came in spurts. A spectator would certainly have put him down for drunk.

"She is going to be married married do you understand? Going to become the wife of another man. Another man is going to possess her do you understand? That man you saw him down stairs he is going to possess her. She Christine oh, God help me! Perhaps he has seen her, been in her presence, heard her voice, looked into her eyes, touched her hand, kiss yes, very likely kissed her this very day. Perhaps he is with her at this instant now he, with *her* do you understand? While you I I Oh, have mercy on me. Strike me dead And to-morrow morning she is going to marry him, to-morrow morning going to be married Well, well, it's all right. It's none of my business. Yes, it's all right. She can do as she pleases. I can't help it. It's not my affair Only only, I want to know I want to know, *why*? Why is she going to marry him? Only tell me that: why does she want to marry him? Not for love. No! She can't love him. It would be impossible that she should love him. Don't tell me she loves him. No,

no ! Why, I say, look—look at how she loved me—how passionately, how entirely—with what complete, absolute surrender of herself ! Why, after a woman has loved one man that way, I tell you, it is impossible, it is not in nature, for her ever to love another—really love another No ! I don't care what her feeling toward me may be hatred indifference I don't care what I know she does not I know she never can love him love any body else. I know it. It would be against nature—impossible Oh, it's laughable. The idea ! that she should ever feel toward any one as she felt toward me ! Such perfect confidence such perfect giving of herself ! Christine ! Oh, do you remember, Christine ? Do you remember how you loved me ? How your eyes burned with love, and your fingers clung with love, and your bosom rose and fell with love, and your voice thrilled with love ? And all our unutterable intimate joy ? And how you said it was like anguish, it was so keen ? And and Do you remember ! And now, do you mean to say that you can ever be like that with another man—not me—with *him*—with any body ? Like that ? Loving like that ? Oh, no, no ! Monstrous ! Impossible. No, no, you don't love him like that. Nobody could love twice like that. You never can love any one like that—any one but me. Me ! I am the only man who has ever tasted that sweetness—who ever shall taste it. He—oh, the poor

fool and beggar ! He may be married to you a thousand years. He will never taste that—which I have tasted—never get even the perfume of it. Never—never ! And yet and yet, she is going to marry him. Oh, Christine, tell me—for mercy's sake, tell me—why do you marry him ? Why does she want to marry him ? Oh, there may be a hundred reasons. But not for love. I am sure, not for love. Is marriage a proof of love ? Did I marry for love ? She pities him. That's it. He loves her. He has worked upon her sympathies. In despair—hopeless of any happiness for herself—out of pity—she has consented to marry him. He has importuned her—tired her with his entreaties—until she has consented. But not for love Don't tell me she loves him—that my own beautiful Christine—dark-eyed Christine—loves another man—that man. Oh, the fool, the complacent fool, if he dares to imagine that ! That she—my glorious Christine—mine, I say—once mine, always mine—my own—wholly mine—weren't our very souls burned together, into one ?—that *she* loves *him* ! Why, it makes me laugh ! The poor, fatuous fool ! And yet she she is going to marry him to be his wife He is going to possess her have the right to see her, hear her, touch her, every day while I—I—Oh, no ! He thinks so, does he ? I will show him. I will defeat him yet. It is not yet too late. I will go to her—I—now—at once—I will go to *her*—to Christine—yes—and see her, and speak

to her, and touch her—take her in my arms—oh, God!—and tell her how I love her—and how I have suffered—and how I have never ceased to love her—and pour it all out at her feet—all my love and sorrow and remorse—at her feet—now—to-day—before it is too late—and she—she will forgive me, and forget all the pain I have caused her—all the pain and shame—poor Christine, sweet little Christine, whom I hurt so!—she will forgive me, and—and love me again—she will love me—she *does* love me—she *must* love me, I tell you—yes—she will come to me, and love me—and we—she and I—we will go away together—to Europe—to South America—somewhere—anywhere—she and I—Christine and I—together—we will go away together, and—and Oh, what am I saying? God forgive me! What a low, miserable wretch I am! As if I had any power, any right! No, no! she will marry him. He will be happy. Perhaps he will make her happy. Why not? He is good and honest and well-to-do. He loves her, and will be kind to her. Why shouldn't he make her happy? Oh, Christine. I hope he will. If you will only be happy, then I shan't mind. God bless her, and make her happy. She will marry him, and she will love him in a certain way, in a quiet, peaceful way, and she will have children, and be contented, and live in comfort and peace—quietly—gently—forgetting me, and the pain I caused her, and—Oh, God! Oh, God! My punishment is greater than I can bear."

He fell in an inert mass upon the floor, and covered his face with his hands, and moaned again incoherently ; until again, all at once, he sprang to his feet, and, striding back and forth, as before, again began to talk to himself.

"I must see her. I must see her, and let her know. I must see her to-day—before to-morrow morning—before she is married. After that, after she is married, as she will be to-morrow morning—after that, I can never see her. She will have no right to let me see her—no right to think of me, to hear from me—a married woman—another man's wife The letter—the letter I have been writing to her—she will never read it. Waste time—waste paper—waste effort. No use sending it. No use finishing it. After to-morrow morning, after she is married, she will have no right to receive it—to receive any thing from me. . . . Oh, I say, I must see her. If I am ever to see her, ever to let her know, it must be to-day. To-day, or never. After to-day—to-morrow—a married woman—she can never let me approach her—never—never Yes, to-day—right away—at once. I must see her right away, at once Oh, Love ! To think of seeing you—really seeing you—and speaking to you ! Oh, Christine—to-day, this very day, at last ! There, there ! Let me be calm. Let me think. How shall I—how can I manage it ? To see her ? Let me think."

He pressed his hands hard against his brow, beneath which his brain seemed to have become a

whirlpool, sucking into black confusion every faculty for thought he had. He repeated two or three times : " Let me think ; " and kept crushing his brow between his hands, to subdue, if he could, that dizzy, stupid feeling. At last he went on, stammeringly, and in a voice which, from husky, had grown thin and feeble :—

" I must not go to see her at her house. No, that would not do. That would not be fair to her. What would people think, who saw me? They might overhear what I said to her. I might not be able to see her alone. I might—I might meet *him* there. No, I must not go to her house. But this is what I will do. I will write her a note—a little short note—asking her—begging her—to let me have five minutes' speech with her—to come and give me five minutes' speech with her—in Central Park—among our pine-trees in Central Park. She will do it. It is such a little thing, I am sure she will do it. She can't have the heart to refuse to do it. No, no ! There ! I will write the note, and send it at once. In half an hour she will receive it. She will come right away. Within two hours—within two hours from now—I—I shall—I shall see her ! "

With about as clear a realization of what he was doing as he might have had if he had indeed been the worse for drink, so dazed and bewildered did he feel, he opened his trunk, and took from it the materials for writing. Then, seating himself at the table, with a drunken man's comprehension of what

he wrote, upon paper that swayed boisterously up and down under his eyes, he dashed off the following note :—

“CHRISTINE : Just learned I have just learned that to-morrow morning that you are going to be married to-morrow morning. Please read this note through. There is nothing in it which will harm you to read. It is essential to my peace of mind that, before you are married, I should say something to you, see you and say something, five words, which it will not take me take five minutes for me to say, and which it will harm no one for you to hear, neither you, nor your future husband, but will be a great mercy to me. In mercy, in common pity to a suffering human being, I beg of you, let me see you, and say this to you. In mercy to one who is suffering all the agony of hell in life, which I know I deserve, only that does not make it any easier to bear, in mercy, give me a chance to speak with you. I don't come to your house, because it would not do, would not be fair to you, for if he should see me there, it would be unpleasant for you. So, at once, as soon as you receive this, come to the rock among the pines in Central Park, and give me five minutes' speech with you. It will be as great a mercy as if you were to give a cup of water to a man dying tortured by thirst. I promise to say nothing which it will be wrong for you to hear, or for me to say. Don't be afraid of me. I shall never hurt you any more.

I shall not try to dissuade you from marrying him. On the contrary, marry him, and be happy, if you can. Any thing so long as you are happy. I dare say he will make you happy. I pray God that he may. Only, for pity's sake, you who have a kind and pitiful heart, for pity's sake, in mercy to me, for the sake of the love that was between us, Christine, grant me this one request, which will harm no living man or woman, neither him nor you, nor my wife, and come to the rock among the pines in Central Park. I shall be willing to die after I have seen you and spoken to you. God ! I would rather die now than have you refuse. Come at once. I shall go there right away, immediately, and I shall wait there until you come. My soul is burning up with something which I must say to you, which you must let me say to you, Christine, and you can not be so hard, so cruel, as not to come, you who have such a tender, kind heart, Christine. My agony is so great, and you can relieve it so easily, by simply coming for five minutes. Look, you are going to give him your whole life—years and years. Can't you give me five minutes ? He can afford to let me have five minutes, he who is going to have years and years. Come. It is the only favor I shall ever ask of you. My head is so confused, queer, as though all my wits were scattered, I don't know how to put it so as to move you to come. I seem to have it on the tip of my tongue, the thing to say that will persuade you, and then when I try to grasp it, and write it down, it is gone. If you

understood why and how much I want you to come, I know you would come. I do not believe that you can be so hard as to refuse this to a man who is broken-hearted, and almost crazy with remorse, and who promises by all that is sacred, before God, gives you his solemn word of honor, not to say a thing which it would be wrong for you to hear, who are going to be married, or for me to say, who am married already. Gives you his solemn word of honor. Only, before you are married, and so eternally separated from me, worse than death, to-morrow, before that, come and let me speak five words. If there is any mercy in your heart, you won't disappoint me. Come at once. I am going there right away, now, to wait for you. The rock among the pines. You know. Christine! Christine! For God's sake!—ELIAS BACHARACH."

This note, without stopping to read it over, he enveloped, and addressed. Then, in great haste, donning his hat, he left his room, and, too impatient to wait for the elevator, ran down stairs to the office, where he bade the clerk summon a messenger.

"Yes, sir," said the clerk; and, with a click-click-whir-r-r, off went the summons from the instrument. After which, the clerk returned to the dirty paper novel he had been reading. Elias wondered, in a dull, hazy way, how any body could have the heart to read a novel.

Pending the messenger's arrival, he paced rest-

lessly hither and thither about the broad, marble-paved entrance-hall of the house, and tried to get the better of that queer, confused feeling in his head. Tried in vain, however ; for, from moment to moment, it grew more pronounced : a feeling of congestion, as though his brain was solidifying, turning into stone ; as though gradually and simultaneously his different senses were being sealed up.

By and by, as if through a deadening medium of some sort, as if through a thick blanket, he heard a lusty young voice shout : " Call ? "

He looked. As if through a veil, he saw a boy in brass buttons standing in front of him.

" Yes," said Elias ; and it required a great effort of will to concentrate his mind sufficiently to find, and to regulate his organs of speech sufficiently to shape, the words : " Yes, come with me."

He led the boy to the corner of Seventh Avenue and Forty-eighth Street. The sun shone brightly. There was no wind. But it was very cold. Elias thought : " Perhaps it is the cold that makes me feel so strangely. I feel exactly as though my brain were being frozen, as hard as ice."

When they had reached the corner, he said : " Now, young man, I want you to take this note to this address, No. —, right on this block—that house, over there, just beyond the lamp post—and I want you to ask to see the lady to whom it is directed—Miss Redwood—to see her in person ; do you understand ? See her in person, and deliver this note into her own hands, and to nobody else. And then

you come back here to this corner, where I shall wait for you. Now, hurry."

"Yes, sir," replied the boy, with a sagacious wink; "I catch on, sir;" and started off.

Elias watched him—down and across the street, and up her stoop—till he vanished in her vestibule. For what seemed an eternity, the boy remained out of sight. Then, presently, he reappeared; and in a minute or two was again at his employer's side.

"Well," questioned Elias, "well, did—did you see her?"

"Yes, sir; sawr 'er."

It made Elias's heart beat to realize that this boy had just stood in his lady's presence, had looked full upon her, breathed the atmosphere that she glorified, listened to the celestial music of her voice. It was with something akin to reverence for the young barbarian, that he repeated: "You saw her, you actually saw her!"

"Well, so I remarked, sir," replied the boy.

"And—and you gave her the note?"

"That's what I done, sir."

"What did she say?"

"Say? She didn't say nawthing."

"Nothing at all? Not a word?"

"Well, sir, here's how it was. I says, 'Redwood?' and she says, 'Yes;' and I says, 'Sign;' and she signed; and that's all there was *to* it."

"She signed? Have—have you got her signature?"

"Why, certainly. Here you are."

The boy exhibited a bit of pink paper, upon which, in the hand that he knew so well, Elias, with a breath-taking thrill, read her name : "Christine Redwood." He took the paper between his fingers. It was like a talisman. Her touch, scarcely a moment since, had warmed it, her face shadowed it. He had to struggle with himself, to keep from carrying it to his lips, and kissing it, then and there.

"What—how much—will you take for this paper?" he demanded of the boy.

"Nawthing. Got to return it to the office."

"I'll give you a dollar for it."

"Jimminy! You must want it pretty bad."

"Well, will you part with it for a dollar?"

The boy reflected; wrestled with temptation for an instant; in the end said: "Well, sir, all is, you'll have to sign me another; that's all, sir. Let's have the dollar." He produced a duplicate bit of pink paper, upon which Elias executed the only forgery of which he was ever guilty. Then a bright silver dollar changed hands. Our hero pocketed his invaluable purchase, and set his face toward Central Park.

XXI.

BACK and forth, among the pine-trees that had been witnesses of the happiest moments of his life; over the carpet of frozen pine-needles,

every inch of which was holy ground to him, because her foot had trodden it in the past; through the intense cold and stillness; Elias marched, waiting for her to come. Harder than ever was the frost that bound and benumbed his senses; but in his heart, there was the heat of battle. Hope and doubt struggled together there, in mortal combat.

At one instant, doubt getting the upper hand, he would cry: "Will she come? No, God help me, it is most unlikely. I may as well make up my mind to it. She will not come."

Next instant, hope inflaming him: "She *will* come. I know she will. She has a kind and tender heart. She can't find it in her to refuse. She will come; and she will let me tell her how I love her, and how I have suffered; and she will soften toward me, and forgive me. And perhaps her love for me will come back—and overpower her—and make her forget every thing else—and then—she—perhaps—oh, merciful God! if—if she should consent!"

Thus he alternated between hell and heaven.

If he had been enabled to penetrate but a very little way into the future, I suspect, his thoughts and his emotions would have been of a quite different order.

"I must have been here at least an hour by this time," he said. "It must be almost time for her to get here."

With stiffened fingers he drew out his watch.

“ Having looked at it : “ Yes ; she may get here any minute now.” Oh, how the prospect made his heart throb ! “ She may be not further than a few yards away.—Ah !—Hark ! I—I hear a footstep. I swear, I hear a footstep. Is it she ? It comes down the path in this direction. God—God grant that it is she. Nearer—nearer—nearer——”

What was this ? Bending forward, every muscle strained, every nerve on tension, to follow the footstep that he seemed to hear—suddenly his voice failed him, and expired in a low, guttural murmur ; suddenly a dreadful spasm contracted all his features ; his face flushed scarlet, then paled as white as marble ; his arm flew up into the air, the fingers clutching at emptiness ; foam flecked his lips ; a groan burst from his throat ; he tottered ; he fell headlong to the earth ; a brief, horrible convulsion, a protracted shudder ; and he lay there, rigid, immobile, as if dead.

The footstep that he had heard passed on into silence.

The pine-trees that sheltered the rock, screened him from sight. This he had used to account one of the chief advantages of the spot. Was it an advantage now ? Perhaps so ; but he would be very bold indeed, who should dare to say yes for certain.

The cold settled down upon him, and wrapped him in its stony embrace. The afternoon wore away. The daylight faded into twilight, the twilight into night. And still Elias lay there, alone with the deadly cold.

In the Bacharach house, on Stuyvesant Square, the family were at dinner, with Elias for their topic. Where was he now, and what doing? they wondered. Enjoying himself, they hoped.

By and by the moon came up, and wove a silvery garment about him. The next day's sun came up, and bathed him in fire, and arrayed him in cloth-of-gold. The sun soared higher and higher. In the distance a church clock struck eleven. She was being married now, probably. Elias did not stir.

The wind veered around into the south-west, and the temperature grew tolerable again. Then some children ventured out, to play in the park. Up to the top of this rock they clambered. Next moment, in gleeful excitement, they were calling to their nurse, whom they had left below in the pathway: "Come, and look at the man asleep!"

The New York papers on Thursday morning contained two announcements, divided from each other only by a thin black line, thus:

MARRIED.

HOSMER—REDWOOD.—In this city, on February 18th, by the Rev. Dr. Frederick Shepard, Robert Emory Hosmer to Christine Redwood.

DIED.

BACHARACH.—In this city, on Tuesday, February 17th, suddenly, Elias, beloved husband of

Matilda Morgenthau, and only son of the late Abraham Bacharach, M. D., in the twenty-eighth year of his age. The Lord gave, and the Lord hath taken away ; blessed be the name of the Lord.

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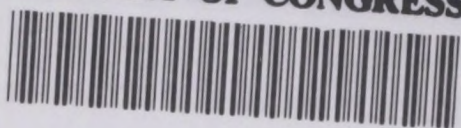
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